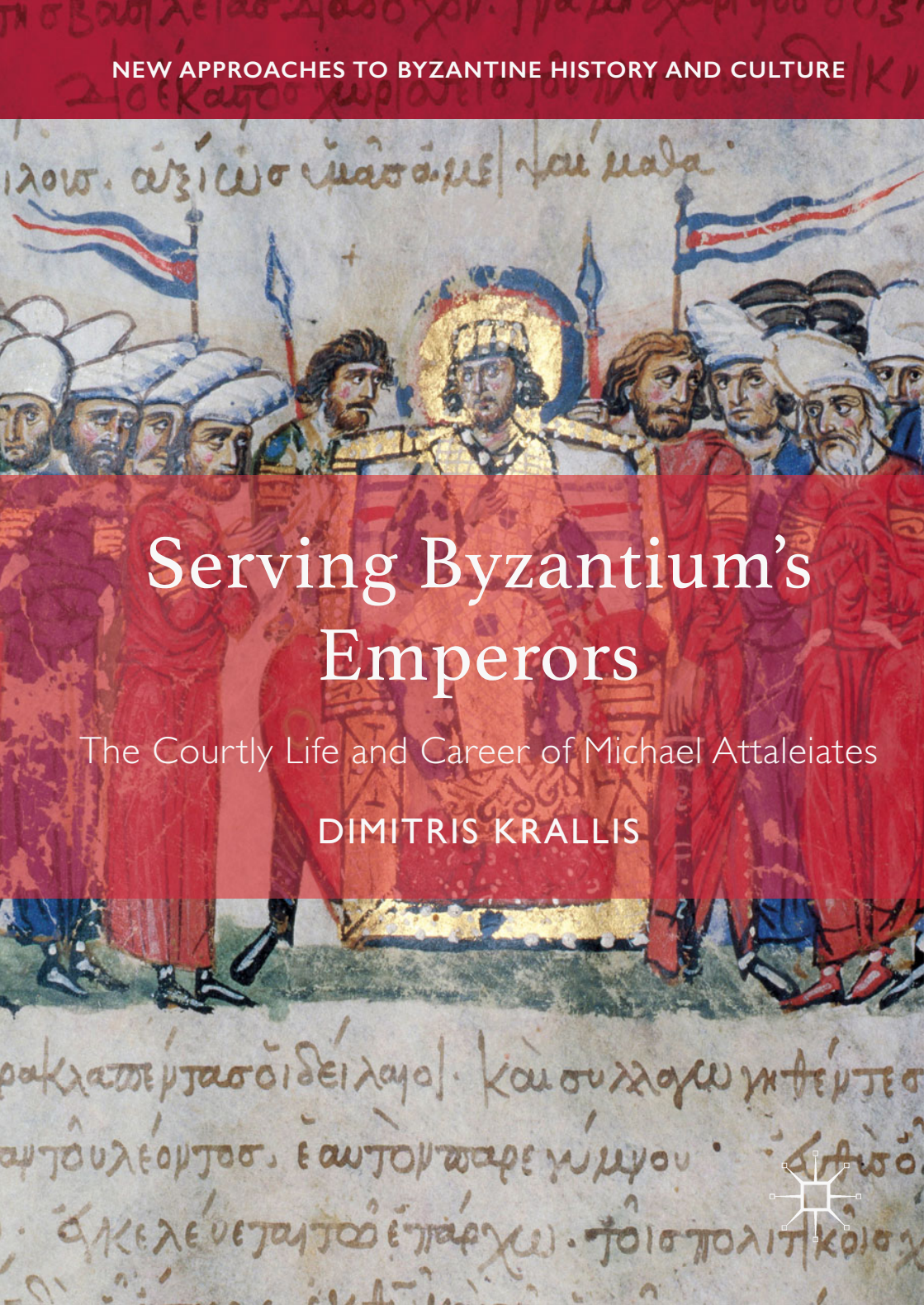


NEW APPROACHES TO BYZANTINE HISTORY AND CULTURE



Serving Byzantium's Emperors

The Courty Life and Career of Michael Attaleiates

DIMITRIS KRALLIS



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The Courtly Life and Career
of Michael Attaleiates

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Therefore since I have received such great blessings... so as to become a member of the senate, in spite of my humble and foreign background, and to be enrolled among the elite of the senators (whom the language of old used to call "aristocrats"), and among the most illustrious of the civic judges, and to pride myself on public honors, I ought surely to offer appropriate and worthy gratitude to God the giver of such blessings.

—Michael Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 21

[Our enemy], quills and inkwells in hand, imitated scribbling in tomes, mocking us as secretaries

—Niketas Choniates, *History*, p. 594

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ENTWINED

Byzantine writers apparently loved lush meadows. To the encomiast writing about the virtues of an emperor, his object of praise was like a meadow teeming with flowers, each virtue representing a different blossom. For the historian too, a book could be a meadow; its pages bundled pleasant vignettes, all together constituting an appealing landscape. Michael Psellos tells us that people jump with joy as they walk through meadows. Then again, lest the association of history with pleasure offend the more austere among us, the flowers in meadows also attracted bees and those were useful, utility being a central concern of the historian.

Like Emperor Konstantinos Monomachos, who was known in the eleventh century for his gardening prowess and his efforts to replicate nature on the palace grounds, I have sought to create a meadow of words out of carefully selected and deliberately arranged materials. The flowers in this meadow are sometimes my ideas but more often than not the assemblage of other scholars' wisdom—both medieval and modern—the plan is mine. Taken as a whole, like a grand vista on a meadow teeming with flowers of all kinds, this book offers what I hope is a coherent, academically useful and altogether pleasing way of reading Byzantine history. In its particulars, it offers vignettes and detail, which may in turn lead us to the consideration of the whole and spur broader reflection on the nature of Romania, the polity of the people we call the Byzantines.

This book has been a long time coming. It was conceived in late 2006 as *parergon*, a side project. It was a distraction from the stressful duty to my professional self, the completion of the first, tenure-granting monograph. And yet, for all that working on it over all these years has given me hours upon hours of pure joy—a smirk and smile often marking my face, as I wrote biography and pondered on the reactions of audiences to Attaleiates’ journey—it also raised a number of uncomfortable questions. Was another book on this medieval judge necessary? Was returning to the man I have studied for so long evidence that I was running out of ideas? Was what is discussed in here derivative?

You hold the book in your hands, which suggests that over time I came to the following answers to these three questions: yes, no and no. The book—I tell myself and I hope the reader agrees—is not really about Attaleiates per se but more broadly about Romanía, its mandarins and high court officials, and the culture of the Byzantine eleventh century in general. For all that historians and audiences remain fascinated with Byzantium, we rarely think about what truly made it different from other contemporary polities. Its *noblesse de robe*, to which Attaleiates belonged, was one such crucial distinguishing characteristic.

Attaleiates did not leave us all that much for a detailed biographical sketch to emerge from his writings alone. His voice sometimes echoes loudly in his writings, yet more often than not his silences are deafening. What you have in your hands is therefore the result of a peculiar form of Byzantine crowdsourcing. A number of Attaleiates’ contemporaries (do they really make up a crowd?) and their experiences are selected and creatively bundled to produce a historically plausible approximation of what was. Creativity may raise an eyebrow or two, hence the discomfort discussed above.

This book relies heavily on the painstaking, meticulous, funny, often brilliant, and at times frustrating work of my colleagues in the field of Byzantine Studies. From their pages, I liberally and with gratitude borrow as I relate Attaleiates’ life. The past few years have seen established ideas scrutinized even as new ways of understanding the polity of the Romans, its people, and its culture have taken hold. Like the monarchy of the medieval Romans, Byzantine Studies appears eternal and stable. While, however, in conferences and in our own work we celebrate the past and pay our respects to genealogies of knowledge that provide comforting stability to what we know, in the pages of journals and

books a gradual, subtle, but tangible repositioning of the field has taken place. Attaleiates' life, as it emerges from the pages of this book, is an attempt to reflect on these changes and relate them through the accessible medium of biography to both colleagues and, hopefully, a broader audience.

Well before it could be considered for any reader, let alone a broad audience, this book has for years existed as ideas circulated, discussed, and tested among friends, colleagues, and students. Former and current graduate students at Simon Fraser University patiently endured my excited monologues and hand waving, showing keen interest in the project. Alex Olson, Chris Dickert, Aleks Jovanovic, and Jovana Andjelkovic have spent hours in conversation over food and drinks on this or that aspect of the story. John Fine's Michigan cohort—Anthony Kaldellis, Adam Shor, Young Kim, Alex Angelov, and Ian Mladjov—have always been willing to exchange ideas, Ian ever ready to improve our work with his stunning works of cartography. Ray Van Dam's storytelling and sense for historically significant minutiae is always with me. I owe my Ann Arbor colleagues thanks for the opportunity to discuss and further develop my ideas on Attaleia as a Byzantine city-state by attending a symposium at the University of Michigan in honor of Diane Owen Hughes.

During my sabbatical year, Catherine Holmes' intercession offered me three stimulating months as a Visiting Fellow at University College, Oxford. Her hospitality was invaluable, while conversations with college veterans George Cawkwell and Alexander Murray proved stimulating and endlessly whimsical. James Howard-Johnston and Mark Whittow welcomed me back into the uniquely lively Oxford Byzantine community. Mark's knack for the unexpected question and openness to new, curious ideas was a reminder of what I had so enjoyed during my studies at Oxford in the 1990s. I am profoundly saddened by his passing and by the fact that I will not be able to get his reaction to this book.

For years, I have been sharing with Leonora Neville this or that aspect of my project during our annual meetings at the Byzantine Studies Conference. Her enthusiastic interest in Attaleiates' tale helped me bring this project to fruition. I have to thank her and the editorial board of the *New Approaches to Byzantine History and Culture* series at Palgrave Macmillan for the trust they put on this book. And so we come to Nicole, who for more than a decade has offered support, companionship, and ceaseless questioning of all ideas and certainties. I set the first words

of this book on a word processor's luminous white page while sitting on *her* couch at Heather Street. A few blocks west and to the south, the last taps on the keyboard ring from the living room in *our* apartment as this project comes to an end.

Vancouver, Canada

Dimitris Krallis

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ABBREVIATIONS

- Anna Komnene, *Alexiad* Anna Komnene. *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, ed. D. R. Reinsch and A. Kambylis. CFHB. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2001.
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BYZANTINE RULERS FROM THE RISE OF THE MACEDONIAN DYNASTY TO THE KOMNENIAN REVOLUTION

A straight-up list of men and women who held supreme power during the two hundred years before the first Crusade cannot account for the subtle and not so subtle developments at the commanding heights of the Medieval Roman polity. I have, nevertheless, indented the reigns of the four emperors who came to power by associating themselves with the empress *Zoe*, the daughter of Konstantinos VIII, the last male heir to the Macedonian dynasty.

- 867–886 Basileios I
- 886–912 Leon VI, the Wise
- 912–913 Alexander
- 913–920 Konstantinos VII, Porphyrogennetos under regency
- 920–944 Romanos I Lekapenos
- 944–959 Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos
- 959–963 Romanos II, son of Konstantinos VII
- 963–969 Nikephoros II Phokas
- 969–976 Ioannes I Tzimiskes
- 976–1025 Basileios II, son of Romanos II
- 1025–1028 Konstantinos VIII, son of Romanos II
- 1028–1042 *Zoe*, daughter of Konstantinos VIII
- 1028–1034 Romanos III Argyros, married to *Zoe*
- 1034–1041 Michael IV the Paphlagonian, married to *Zoe*
- 1041–1042 Michael V Kalaphates, *Zoe*'s adoptive son
- 1042–1055 Konstantinos IX Monomachos, married to *Zoe*

- 1055–1056 Theodora (Zoe's sister)
- 1056–1057 Michael VI Bringas or Stratiotikos
- 1057–1059 Isaakios I Komnenos
- 1059–1067 Konstantinos X Doukas
- 1067–1068 Eudokia Makremvolitissa, widow of Konstantinos X Doukas
- 1068–1071 Romanos IV Diogenes, married to Eudokia Makremvolitissa
- 1071–1078 Michael VII Doukas, son of Konstantinos X Doukas
- 1078–1081 Nikephoros III Botaneiates
- 1081–1118 Alexios I Komnenos

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

In a time of culturally sensitive readers, scholars should phase out the distorting Anglicization and Latinization of Byzantine names. Mostly following the *Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire*, I have adopted the actual Greek forms of proper names—for example, Konstantinos Monomachos rather than Constantine Monomachos (or, perish the thought, Monomachus). In deference to his Latin cultural background, the first Christian emperor will still appear as Constantine. Keeping a clean text while conveying phonetically the long and short *etas* and *iotas* of the Greek is nevertheless tricky. I have thus kept unaccented *etas*, as in Ioannes, Diogenes, and Maleses, and opted for *iota* (ι) when rendering accented forms, as in Digenis. The dignities and offices of the men and women who populate the pages of this book have been transliterated directly and italicized. The reader should, however, note that it is sometimes impossible to offer an accurate translation given our lack of knowledge regarding certain titles (e.g., *vestes*). Since no policy can remain fully consistent, I have retained some first names and place-names more widely used in Anglicized form outside the field of Byzantine or classical studies, such as Menander, Antioch, Constantinople, Cyclades, or Trebizond.

NOTE ON BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS AND ENDNOTES

To keep the account of Attaleiates' life as continuous as possible I opted for a dual system of citation. Sparse endnotes refer the reader to primary documents and select modern works where essential, while bibliographical essays at the end of the manuscript offer more on the relevant scholarly debates.



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A stunning panorama of the thickly forested Pontic Alps rising sharply as backdrop to Trebizond impresses to this day travelers that set sail from this ancient Black Sea port-city like modern age Argonauts on their way to myriad destinations. And yet on a hot day early in September 1071, the judge of the Hippodrome and the *velum* Michael Attaleiates had little time to think of nature's flare for the picturesque. Bleak thoughts surely run through his mind as he left Asia Minor behind him on his way to Constantinople. Beyond the Pontic mountain range, days upon days of frantic horseback riding, to the south and east of Trebizond in the vicinity of Lake Van, lay an apocalyptic landscape littered with the swelling bodies of Roman soldiers. Attaleiates had only narrowly escaped the fate of these men during the bloody aftermath of the imperial army's crushing defeat at the hands of the Seljuq Sultan Alp Arslan. Some of his colleagues had not been so lucky and the emperor himself had been captured, a first in centuries of Roman history.

Usually judges like Attaleiates are mere shadows on the dimly lit canvas of the empire's long legal and administrative history. We know the names of numerous members of Byzantium's judicial class and yet, more often than not, their names alone do not tell us much. Most survive as inscriptions on lead seals that reveal little about their careers on the judge's bench or their lives beyond the hustle and bustle of the lively byzantine courts. A smaller number of judges left us their writings on law from which we glean information regarding their profession and

even, sometimes, a sense of their approach to justice. Attaleiates, however, was reasonably well known in his own time. The sources at our disposal are richer and while only small ciphers from the much larger mosaic of his life actually survive, what emerges from those is colorful and illuminating. In fact, Attaleiates was likely a household name in Constantinople at the time.

A few years prior to the aforementioned catastrophe, Attaleiates was one of the presiding judges during what in his time must have registered as the trial of the century. He joined empress Eudokia and a number of his colleagues in legal drama that in 1067 consumed the attention of the body politic. The general Romanos Diogenes, a respected warrior who had openly expressed his frustration with the empire's handling of Seljuq incursions in Asia Minor, was arraigned for sedition and conspiracy against the throne. Roughly a decade after the fact Attaleiates penned a short account of the event in which he explained that the court condemned Romanos despite a sense, shared by every single one of its members, that the general's motivation had been irreproachable and his intentions noble. Alas, sedition against imperial authority could under no circumstances be condoned, patriotism notwithstanding. In a turn of events that contemporaries attributed to cupid, whose arrows many thought had struck Eudokia in the course of the trial, the empress spared the condemned man.¹ Romanos had proven too handsome to kill and but weeks later he became Eudokia's husband and emperor. Little ink has been spilled on this tantalizing bit of historical trivia. Buried in Attaleiates larger *History* of his times it is quickly sidestepped by readers who itch to leave behind them Constantinopolitan intrigue and follow Romanos and his army on his campaigns against the Seljuqs in Asia. And yet discussions no doubt raged in Constantinople, a fecund ground for political gossip, regarding every detail of the trial.² The people in the streets surely pointed at the judge as he rode from the courts to his home and back, dressed in his best silk fabrics.

Such notoriety rarely came without direct material rewards. Two decrees bearing golden imperial seals, issued by Emperors Michael VII and Nikephoros III in 1075 and 1079 respectively, indicate that the man who tried Romanos Diogenes turned fame into real political dividend and tangible material benefits in the years after the trial. Here is how the secretariat working for Michael VII recorded what their emperor wished to say about Attaleiates:

There is nothing at all which can render the generous soul of a ruler even more generous than the sincere loyalty of a grateful subject whose heart is eager to serve his master. If this man is also adorned with learning of general usefulness and a good disposition and intelligence, this encourages his master to even more generosity. For this man attracts his master to himself as a magnet does iron, and he asks, as is reasonable, to enjoy abundant favors from him. Indeed an example has been revealed right before our eyes and very close at hand that this is so and that these words are true, namely the *anthypatos* and judge, Michael Attaleiates, a man venerated for the dignity of his bearing and his good character, a very serious individual of great learning and admirable experience, and even more admirable is his loyalty to my majesty, a man who is prouder of this [loyalty] with which he is adorned than he is of his other accomplishments, as a long period of time has clearly revealed.³

The parsing index finger stops at the very middle of the paragraph above, where the emperor notes that right before his eyes, very close at hand Attaleiates stood as a model of loyalty to his rule. This document is testament to Attaleiates' social and political success. The judge, who first tried and then served Romanos Diogenes loyally, figures here as a respectable and trustworthy servant of the very regime that in time toppled the warrior emperor and ordered his blinding. A second imperial decree was issued by the successor to Michael VII, Nikephoros III Botaneiates, to whom Attaleiates eventually dedicated his historical work. As with the document cited above, the language on this one suggests that the judge remained within the charmed circle of imperial confidants. In the tumultuous 3rd quarter of the eleventh century, Attaleiates successfully navigated courtly intrigue over four successive administrations from Konstantinos X to Nikephoros III and with every upheaval and change at the helm of the state increased his influence and wealth, while at the same time carefully shepherding his one and only son into the ranks of the empire's officialdom.

This book then is about this one man, a respected judge, effective courtier, and active politician. In a sense, it is a micro-history: a study of Byzantium's pen-pushers, a look at the role of highly educated officials in the empire's politics through the focused engagement with one man's life. Men like Attaleiates produced laws, framed imperial ideology, promoted some imperial reformist initiatives while undermining others, and interpreted the Roman past in ways compelling for both emperors and citizens.⁴ The medieval Roman polity, the state that the

Byzantines themselves called Romanía (the land of the Romans), was an imagined community created on parchment by Attaleiates and his peers and defended on land and sea by the very same men who populated the pages of their histories. Courtiers and bureaucrats are what distinguished Romanía from feudal polities and emerging republics in the west. They were such a prominent aspect of Romanía's social and political life that thirteenth-century Crusaders mocked Byzantine officialdom by pretending to write in ledgers while holding quills. And yet, ironically, there is perhaps only one accessible study of this influential class of men. Members of the empire's erudite officialdom no doubt cast an unimpressive shadow when placed next to warrior emperors, rebellious generals, and hardy warriors. It is to them, however, that we must turn in order to understand the distinct nature of the medieval Roman polity and state, since the quill of the bureaucrat often trumped the sword of the empire's soldiers, shaping, for better or for worse, the fate of the empire and the way that its history is remembered.

This then is a biography of a man, whom we know by the three texts he left us, all of them little read and yet important in their own right for the study of Byzantium. It may appear disingenuous that as a historian I write about a medieval "colleague," yet it should be clear from the outset that this is not a study of Attaleiates as a writer of history. Our subject was after all a judge, a member of the court, who only incidentally dabbled with history. In that, Attaleiates differs from my colleagues all around the world and of course he differs from me. Unlike him, we write history to earn a living. Unlike us, he did not pay his bills by crafting historical narratives and he was by no means expected to instruct students in a classroom. Different, however, as his career path may have been from that of most academic historians, he nevertheless sought to fulfill an aspiration as true today as it was back in the eleventh century. As an educated individual Attaleiates partook in a vibrant debate on politics and culture and aimed to instruct future generations, much like his modern counterparts who teach in university classrooms.

Still, one can take such comparisons only so far. Attaleiates' audiences were unlike ours and, as a result, his narrative techniques and ours are distinctly different. We are supposed to be self-effacing and keep our biases under control, or at least clearly stated, as we process information with academic rigor. He, on the other hand, wore some of his biases on his sleeve, while expressing some others more discreetly, trying not to step on the toes of too powerful a court rival. He also made cameo

appearances in his own historical narrative in an attempt to highlight his role in the events described and used his own deeds as examples for his readers. Modern scholarship on Byzantium has noted this “autobiographical impulse” of the historians and chroniclers who wrote in the period from the tenth century onwards. It is this phenomenon that I exploit here in order to reconstruct aspects of Michael Attaleiates’ life, not as a historian, but as judge, courtier, and member of the empire’s bureaucratic elite.

One man then becomes a fellow traveler on a journey through the eleventh century. His trajectory, from provincial birth to Constantinopolitan burial, takes him from a bustling provincial harbor to the palace in Constantinople and the Byzantine army in the battlefield. In examining the details of his life, as those emerge from the diverse texts he left to posterity, we visit the empire’s territories, we walk the streets of Constantinople, we invest on land and real estate, and we take his advice on how to craft an effective tax haven for our fortune. We even face the prospect of death at the hands of the empire’s barbarian enemies.

In proposing such a journey back in time, I seek freedom from the historical presumption that as scholars we may only commit to paper what can be strictly verified by the sources. Such exigency, while in theory ensuring historical accuracy, rarely allows an accessible image of an era to emerge. Our sources, if only they are treated imaginatively, though by no means uncritically, offer a peek at exactly such an image. Whether Attaleiates stared at the sea on a breezy summer afternoon, while sitting at the pier of his hometown harbor, cannot be confirmed by his writings. Yet the fact that he was born in the Mediterranean port town of Attaleia where he spent his childhood makes it an absolute certainty that he had indeed felt the sea breeze in his hair. As a piece of information this little detail may appear speculative and devoid of significance. It does, however, open a window into the mind of this one medieval man and it is up to us to look into it and examine the implications of what we see inside.

The reconstitution of Attaleiates’ experience necessarily also relies on information, which only indirectly deals with him, such as evidence from the historical footprint of other known members of his class. Eustathios Romaios, Michael Psellos, Christophoros Mytilinaios, Symeon Seth, and Basileios Maleses are Attaleiates’ contemporaries whose experiences and worldviews become ciphers in the latter’s portrait. By focusing on a single person’s life, as distilled from his own writings and from the experiences of his contemporaries, this book aims for a semblance

of chronological order. However, as anyone who has ever attempted to relate such a story knows all too well, strict chronological sequence is difficult to achieve without sacrifices in the fluidity of the narration. People recounting their lives rarely do so in straight lines. The inevitable ebb and flow of events and memories lead one back and forth and disrupt the neat linear scheme of the storyteller.

What is more, the story of Attaleiates' life resembles, in a way, a damaged wall painting. There are areas of the composition where the colors are bright, where lines are clearly discernible and patterns visible to all, while in others whole pieces of plaster have fallen off the wall leaving large gaps. Still elsewhere we reconstruct the image by recourse to what we know about similar compositions. As any conservator of art would admit and any archeologist would confirm, a fair degree of uncertainty is involved in the process of restoration. Yet, as with any restored piece of art or architecture, the end result, even if speculative to a degree, will excite our imagination and spur further research in ways that academic caution might not.

What would Attaleiates have made of the notion itself of academic caution? How much was truly at stake for men of his stature and erudition in the field of letters and ideas? Did this seasoned judge, who survived cold marches on rough campaign trails and hails of arrows in far-off battlefields, have cause to fear the "poisoned" quill of a court rival? Decades before the trauma of Mantzikert, a rather different type of war had prepared Attaleiates and his peers for the competitive world of the imperial court. In the capital's schools, in private halls, and even at the palace, aspiring young men wielded turns of phrase and sharp retort as weapons during intense duels for rhetorical supremacy. At times, the emperor himself set up those contests through decrees written in vermilion ink.⁵ The poetry on Christophoros Mytilinaios, Attaleiates' elder contemporary and fellow judge, captures this exhilarating time in Constantinople's educational scene. In his verses "the young... gathering eloquence defeat all the other youths in the dictation contest."⁶ Students from competing schools take flight before the strongest of the young orators "and as [they] flee let paper, ink pen fall to the ground." They "take flight before all others, for [they] will not bear the wound [a] pen inflicts." These "peerless paragon[s] of cowardice" are seen "deserting like a coward before the battle." Crushed before the emperor by others "trained to do battle with words," and wielding "word spears" these victims of pedagogical violence get to "know the dreaded defeat in dictation's art."⁷

The price of failure was dear, exclusion from the charmed circle of imperial officials and confidants at the court.

In truly evocative verses about social inequality the very same poet and judge noted: “among a thousand rich men, myriads even, just one unfortunate joins the lowly, while of the countless wretched poor, just three prosper.”⁸ Even though Attaleiates and his fellow contestants in the battle of words were by no means poor, letters and a good education had all the potential to help them join a world of privilege. Furthermore, despite the poet’s emphasis on the unshakeable social position of the rich, a battle royal among the courtiers and officials who operated in the deeply competitive Byzantine court kept everyone on their toes. Mytilinaios’ contemporary, the well-known teacher, Ioannes Mauropous, felt compelled to respond to critiques of his grammar, in a poem titled “Against the man who criticized the verse ‘sold of gold’ because the preposition is not rightly construed.”⁹ In our time, as White House officials regularly misspell words in official communiqués, such emphasis on correct language use may appear quaint. And yet in Attaleiates’ universe bad grammar could ruin careers. There were no “safe spaces” in Constantinopolitan schooling. Unlike the empire’s enemies, who were more often than not beholden to age-old rules of war and diplomacy, the Byzantine courtier took no prisoners when it came to the battle for reputation, the only currency truly valued in Romanía’s public political culture.

Having successfully maneuvered schoolyard wars, courtly machinations, and battlefield sorrow, Attaleiates lived a comfortable life of a widower in the last years of the 1070s. He divided his time between the capital, with its busy courtly schedule and responsibilities, and his lands in the Thracian city of Raidestos, where he played landlord and patron to the local townspeople. In this period his political and war notes, compiled over a lifetime of active service, slowly morphed into the work that we recognize today as the *History*. By now Attaleiates had achieved the status of an insider. He was apparently advisor on legal affairs to Emperors Michael VII Doukas and Nikephoros III Botaneiates and was even occasionally asked to deliver public orations at court.¹⁰ And yet this was precarious success. At a time of hyperinflation, numerous armed rebellions, military defeats, and catastrophic loss of territory to all manner of barbarian foe, he surely wondered how long his own good fortune could last. With first-hand experience of his imperial patrons’ ineptitude, Attaleiates kept hoping that a man would emerge to guide the sinking

ship of state in safe waters. This person was to be the young *generalissimo* Alexios Komnenos, whom Attaleiates rather slyly cast as a flawless Roman leader in the midst of the *History's* patently dishonest encomium to Nikephoros III. The judge could not, however, count on fortune to produce the great man who would save the Romans from their troubles. In times of crisis, he did what he could to shield himself from instability.

Attaleiates did not live to experience the momentous events unleashed by Alexios when—in an effort to recruit Western warriors for the empire's depleted and demoralized armies—this emperor offered pope Urban II an opportunity to deliver his unprecedented call to Holy War at Clermont (1095 CE).¹¹ We cannot know what this judge steeped in republican ideology would have made of the myriad knights marching east with God's army. We do, however, know what he felt about Latin soldiers in Byzantine service. The *History* speaks admiringly of the indefatigable Rouselios, a Norman warrior who defended Roman lands and raised the standard of rebellion against Constantinople's inept emperors. Attaleiates knew Rouselios personally from his days as military judge and clearly respected him. He was in fact critical of Emperor Michael VII, who failed to see Rouselios' potential as a defender of the polity and instead maltreated him. A few years later another able Norman, the unscrupulous Robert Guiscard, invaded the empire's territories in the Balkans having completed his lightning conquest of Byzantine Italy. To Alexios I Komnenos' young regime this was a stark challenge that Romanía's armies struggled to repel. And yet, Guiscard had only a few years back agreed to a dynastic alliance with the emperor then reigning in Constantinople. This foreign menace appeared all too keen to be domesticated or, as the case may be, Romanized. Years later, as the armies of the Crusade marched toward Constantinople Robert's son Bohemond, a bilingual giant of a man, approached Alexios seeking to join the Byzantine army command. Alexios declined and relations with this Norman reached breaking point in the months that followed. Yet, it is interesting to ponder on what may have been. What would Attaleiates have made of Bohemond's request had he been alive in 1096? Was this Byzantine republican ready to open the empire's fold to the fiery foreigner, much as Romans had done since the first days of Old Rome, or would he have closed ranks, like Alexios, faced with a dynamic world of inflexible faith, militant entrepreneurship, and political opportunism? Let us turn then to our Byzantine mandarin and the life of the Roman polity in the century before the Crusades as we contemplate the answer to this question.

NOTES

1. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 176–81 for Greek and translation, Bekker 97–99 for a widely accessible Greek edition available on line; Konstantinos Manasses in Odysseas Lampsides (ed.), *Constantini Manassis Breviarium Chronicum* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 1997), p. 345, lines 6375–85 for cupid.
2. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 171, lines 11–13 on gossip; Ioannes Mauropous, *Poems*, pp. 424–25, poem 53 on pamphlets; Photios, *Letters*, ep. 1, lines 541–43 in B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink (eds.), *Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia* (Leipzig, 1983–1987), vol. 1, pp. 18–19 on popular judgement of emperors.
3. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 361 for the translation.
4. Z. R. Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture and the Roman Legal Tradition, 867–1056* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 167 on the eleventh century as the apex of the judges’ political authority.
5. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 36–37, Bekker 21.
6. Christophoros Mytilinaios, *Poems*, p. 19, poem 10.
7. Christophoros Mytilinaios, *Poems*, p. 15, poem 9.
8. Christophoros Mytilinaios, *Poems*, p. 23, poem 13.
9. Ioannes Mauropous, *Poems*, p. 383, poem 33.
10. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 532–33, Bekker 292 for delivery of oration; Ludwig Burgmann, “A Law for Emperors: Observations on a Chrysobull of Nikephoros III Botaneiates,” in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium*, ed. Paul Magdalino (London: Ashgate-Variorum, 1994), pp. 247–58, here pp. 253 and 256; Jean Gouillard, “Un Chrysobulle de Nicéphore Botaneiates à souscription synodale,” *Byzantion* 29–30 (1959–1960), pp. 29–41 for Attaleiates’ involvement in legislating for Botaneiates.
11. P. Frankopan, *The First Crusade: The Call from the East* (London: The Bodley Head, 2012) for the Byzantine role in the Crusade.



CHAPTER 2

Attaleiates' Time: Byzantium in the Eleventh Century

“What’s in a name,” asks Juliet. She is in love with Romeo Montague, not his name. She cares not of rivalry, family feud, and politics, all this history that stifles feeling. Juliet hates history. The historian, less romantic to be sure, must instead love a name’s historical burden. George (Greek for farmer), Michael (Hebrew for he who is like God), Abbot, Cooper, Smith, and Scott are names and surnames freighted with meaning much of it historical. Our protagonist’s name and surname are therefore of some interest to us. Attaleiates’ surname suggests origins in the port city of Attaleia, modern Antalya in the southern coast of Turkey. It thus hints at Romanía’s Mediterranean horizons. The Hebrew name Michael, adopted by Christians early on, speaks of his family’s and the empire’s religious inclination. Aside from such onomastic data, Attaleiates’ title, *patrikios*, is also laden with information. While written in Greek, the empire’s formal language, it is in effect of Latin origin, suggesting that Romanía maintained some claim on the history of the Roman Empire. Moreover, the word itself refers to the aristocratic patricians of the Roman Republic and tells a tale of privilege and class distinctions. Attaleiates was also a *krites* (Greek for judge) of the Hippodrome and the *velum*. Those Greek and Latin words, lined up sequentially, add definition to the emerging sketch of Attaleiates’ homeland. On the one hand, the presence of a judge bearing an honorary title associated with some sort of “patrician” aristocracy speaks of a respected and likely well-remunerated professional class of legal experts. On the other, the association of a judge’s office with the Hippodrome, though somewhat

baffling at first sight, reveals a topographical link between justice and the covered Hippodrome that housed a number of the capital's courts by the palace grounds.

The *Court of the Hippodrome* was in fact likely located on the south-eastern side of this gigantic sporting venue, under its bleachers.¹ This Byzantine version of Rome's *circus maximus* hosted chariot races, a Roman pastime that survived well into Attaleiates' days. In the eleventh century, these spectacular and exorbitantly expensive sporting events were staged by emperors in Constantinople and were imbued with formidable ideological caché. They were also topographically associated with yet another court, that of the *velum*, which also sat behind a large awning under the bleachers of the Hippodrome.² This peculiar association of the empire's high courts with Constantinople's premier sporting grounds should not surprise us. The Hippodrome afforded the Constantinopolitan *demos* an opportunity to come together, address the emperor in one voice, and symbolically represent the medieval Roman polity before him in a form of political communication that echoed Rome's republican traditions. That justice and the courts were closely associated with such republican *praxis* was by no means accidental.

As suggested by Attaleiates' name and titles, Romanía was indeed a Mediterranean polity of Christian Greek speakers, carrying on the traditions of the Roman Empire to which it was the only direct descendant. The citizens of this polity were fiercely dedicated to their Roman identity. They were, however, also generous with it, frequently welcoming among themselves numerous newcomers from the world beyond the empire's borders. Alongside the Christian majority, minorities of heterodox or even heretical beliefs also built their lives under the wide umbrella of Roman law. Of these the Jews, though treated as outsiders by Christian writers, nevertheless constituted some of the oldest communities of Greek speakers in the polity. While the empire's western possessions withered away from the fifth century on under the weight of the so-called barbarian invasions, in the eastern Mediterranean Rome endured. Romanía, as Attaleiates' contemporaries called their polity, was ruled by a centralized and bureaucratic state apparatus, manned by educated specialists serving under the supreme authority of the emperor, who was, in the eyes of his subjects, God's rather frequently replaced representative on earth. The empire survived many a foreign invasion and internal crisis after the loss of the west and, since the seventh century, had acted as Europe's beleaguered eastern bulwark against the

expansion of a dynamic and legendarily affluent Islamic world. By the eleventh century, however, Romanía had won the endless war it had been fighting for about four centuries against the caliphate. At the time of Attaleiates' birth then, Romanía was triumphant. And yet this was not to last. The judge lived through an era of dramatic military reversals and political instability that to this day puzzle scholars.

The empire's inability to effectively address the pressing challenges it faced during Attaleiates' lifetime was interpreted early on as a failure of Byzantine leadership. As, over the years, scholars became skeptical of "Great Men History," their assessment of Byzantium's eleventh century ill fortune also changed. During much of the twentieth century, impersonal forces like capital and social phenomena like class struggle supplanted individuals as agents of change and movers of history. In this context, eleventh-century troubles were no longer the doing of men. For some decline was a symptom of feudalization. The loss of peasant freedom attendant to the development of a feudal system was thought to make for indifferent citizens, uncommitted to the defense of their polity. Others instead diagnosed a failure to feudalize. Any good Marxist knew that, however noxious, the feudal lord represented an essential step toward capitalist formation and, one would hope, socialist utopia. By not developing feudal institutions, the Byzantines failed to leap toward the end of history. Marxist analysis notwithstanding, in a world living in the shadow of the Iron Curtain, Byzantium became a byword for the Soviet-style despotism, sclerosis, and economic retardation. The empire's failings were therefore, somewhat anachronistically, attributed to arcane structures of an outdated and repressive economic and social system.³

Ideology aside, for those scholars who had lived through two world wars, the crisis that nearly crushed the empire in the second half of the eleventh century had to be the logical result of deeply rooted social unease and political dysfunction. Something was surely rotten in the polity of the Romans if it so easily succumbed to the unplanned incursions of Seljuq war-bands and the adventurism of a few bold Norman warriors. Recent cohorts of specialists have questioned this bleak assessment. Shifting their gaze from military and political dysfunction, they highlight the cultural florescence and economic prosperity that marked the eleventh century. They consequently downplay the challenges faced by the empire in the period from the death of its greatest Emperor Basileios II in 1025, to the crowning of Alexios Komnenos in 1081, barely 15 years before the first Crusade. The debacle at Mantzikert and the loss of nearly

half the empire's landmass in the 1070s and 1080s still call for an explanation, but warfare no longer monopolizes our readings of the empire's history (Fig. 2.1).

A more satisfactory explanation of eleventh-century developments inevitably involves a degree of synthesis. In the period extending from the first Islamic invasions in the early seventh century to the end of the iconoclast controversy in the mid-ninth Romanía relied on a state apparatus well adjusted to the perennial warfare necessary for the defense of the homeland. A fine-tuned bureaucracy and the resilient society ruled by it deployed armed forces that in time pushed back the armies of the caliphate and ushered a period of rapid military and territorial expansion. Led by a series of competent field commanders and by three extraordinary martial emperors—Nikephoros II Phokas, Ioannes I Tzimiskes, and Basileios II—Roman armies turned tables on the caliphate over the course of the tenth century. The social and economic changes brought about by conquest undergirded much of the cultural florescence discussed earlier. Still, all was not benign. Socioeconomic and cultural change could not be effectively accommodated by this successful yet inflexible system of governance and may have contributed to the crisis that led in the last fifth of the eleventh century to the rise of Alexios I



Fig. 2.1 Map of Romanía in 1025

Kommenos and the arrival of the Crusades. Let us, however, take a closer look on the developments that marked Byzantine life in the period under discussion.

In the beginning, everything was peaceful and calm. It is therefore symbolically appropriate that Attaleiates' father was called Eirenikos (the pacific one). Eirenikos' wife Kale (the good one) gave birth to Michael in the final years of Emperor Basileios II's reign (r. 976–†1025). When shortly after Michael's birth the legendary ruler died, men and women, the likes of Eirenikos and Kale, who had lived whole lives under Basileios' seemingly eternal reign, contemplated the potential consequences of his passing with calm assurance.⁴ Romanía seemed strong and at the time extended from the Danube and the Dalmatian coasts to modern-day Azerbaijan, the Caucasus, and northern Mesopotamia. Its ambitious leaders imagined their pennons and standards waving, once again, on the island of Sicily. In Mediterranean waters, the empire's navy was seldom challenged. On its part, the Byzantine army, a mix of farmer-soldiers and well-paid mercenaries, both indigenous and foreign, was a well-oiled machine led by professional generals and occasionally by the commander in chief himself, the emperor. The army did not avoid defeats, yet as a rule it dominated the battlefield through careful planning, conservative tactics, and ruthless pursuit of its tactical or strategic objectives.

When Basileios II died, the Byzantines ruled roughly double the land his forefather Basileios I—the first of the venerated Macedonian emperors—had handed over to his own son Leon in the late ninth century. Over a century and a half since Leon's accession, imperial armies had added significant swaths of land in both Asia and Europe to the state's tax registers. By 1025, the treasury was filled to the brim and the emperor could afford to excuse his subjects' taxes for two entire years.⁵ Even though the empire's Asian frontier collapsed but fifty years after Basileios II's glorious reign, we have tended to avert our gaze from the effects of that earlier rather extraordinary bout of expansion on the Roman polity. During the two to three decades of relative peace after Basileios' death, Constantinople exponentially increased its revenues. A letter written more than two hundred years before this time by the legendary Caliph Harun al-Rashid to Emperor Konstantinos VI helps us better understand eleventh-century conditions. In it, the Caliph explained that the peace treaty between Romanía and the realm of Islam had allowed Roman laborers and artisans to quickly rework land

previously devastated by war. People who had taken refuge on craggy mountains and marshes were now able to return to their hearths in order “to rebuild and innovate in agricultural methods... digging canals, planting trees, and causing springs to burst forth, in such a way that they prospered.”⁶ Harun al-Rashid warned that return to warfare would reverse the situation and destroy all that human ingenuity had achieved in conditions of peace.

This fascinating fragment of diplomatic correspondence outlines the blessings that even a short-lived peace could bestow upon a land and its people. By the middle of the eleventh century, Asia Minor had experienced considerably more than a few years of peace. After some sixty years of nearly uninterrupted calm, many Romans of Attaleiates’ time had never experienced the hardship and heartache that came with war. Under Constantinople’s mostly virtuous rule, the empire’s provincial towns and villages grew larger and more prosperous reaping the benefits of stability. The Aegean became once again a sea of peace and trade after Nikephoros Phokas put an end to Saracen buccaneering by re-conquering Crete in 960. After that same austere emperor followed up his earlier conquest by taking Cyprus five years later, trade routes to and from the Levant came under Byzantine control. By Basileios’ reign, the emirate of Aleppo in Syria had been forcefully integrated into the Byzantine economic sphere, while the recently re-conquered city of Antioch, a traditional end point of the southern branch of the silk road, was once again in Roman hands. Networks of exchange, which had been operating below capacity or even lay dormant for centuries during the empire’s long struggle against the caliphate, were coming to life, boosting local economies, and helping new classes of people into levels of prosperity unseen since late antiquity.

Important cities such as Tarsos in Kilikia, Antioch in Syria, Melitene in Mesopotamia, and Theodosiupolis in Armenia, centers of trade and administration, once more, became parts of the Roman realm and enriched Byzantine urban culture. As for the empire’s own towns, many of which over centuries of sustained Islamic pressure operated as little more than provincial trade fairs and military camps, they now showed signs of vitality and growth. A sense of security unleashed the people’s economic potential leading to an increase in revenues, which went hand in hand with a demographic boom; that much is confirmed by the archeological and numismatic record.⁷ Economic development also gave a boost to new actors in Romanía’s social scene. In towns all around the empire, new money sought a place under the sun. Often the newcomers

married into old families desperate to graft coin on their venerable lineage. On occasion, however, there was trouble in the city, the empire's republican heritage bubbling to the surface along with its less desirable corollaries: acrimony and violence.⁸

Recent work on the period saw in these developments an opening of society. Classical education, for centuries a prerequisite for a career in the empire's bureaucracy, was now far more than cryptic code language for communication between courtiers. In Attaleiates' lifetime, the classics became a vocabulary through which intellectuals and a new breed of dynamic political agents (the two categories frequently overlapped) attempted to describe the society in which they lived. The ideas engendered in the process were often rather innovative, if not outright revolutionary. Romanía's intellectual forces are awakened in the eleventh century and seek in the world of antiquity solutions to burning contemporary problems. As during the renaissance three centuries later, this turn to the classics was no stale regurgitation of the past, but creative repurposing of an ancient Roman legacy, an adaptation and reworking of old ideas to new conditions.

This sense of intellectual excitement and the much-expanded opportunities for work in a growing empire's administrative apparatus attracted an ambitious and increasingly diverse youth to the epicenter of intellectual fermentation in Constantinople. As with modern societies in the post-colonial west, such diversity was also the product of empire and conquest. Within the drastically stretched borders of the eleventh-century polity, large numbers of new subjects of Serbian, Bulgarian, Arab, and Armenian extraction now lived side by side. The inhabitants of Syria were mostly Arabic speakers, while in the Balkans various Slavic dialects dominated. Closer to Attaleiates' homeland, Arab merchants frequented the coasts of Pamphylia and Kilikia, in southern Asia Minor. To the east, a starker set of choices had faced the Muslim communities of the re-conquered territories. Most were cruelly ejected from the empire's lands in the long years of the Byzantine *Reconquista*.⁹ Christians from the lands of the caliphate, who fled Muslim reprisals and new practices of forced Islamization in Fatimid Egypt, entered their recently abandoned homes and kept hearths alight. Only a select number, as the case was with the Muslims of Antioch, were integrated into Romanía's social fabric. The bilingual astronomer Symeon Seth, who flourished in the capital during Attaleiates' lifetime, was a Roman of Jewish faith from these newly conquered Arab lands. Where the empire looked west, the coasts

of the Ionian and Adriatic Seas were accustomed to the Italian dialects of Venetian and Amalfitan merchants. It goes without saying that the polity of Greek-speaking mostly orthodox Romans which from the seventh to the ninth centuries forged a relatively homogenous religious and ethnic identity under relentless assault from the caliphate could not but change with the *reconquista*. It is therefore not accidental that authors of the time though sometimes crass and xenophobic nevertheless betray surprising tolerance for difference when they talk about the empire's new subjects and its barbarian enemies.¹⁰

The ethnic diversity of the provinces was mirrored in Constantinople, which lay at the center of a network of roads spanning out toward the frontiers like crooked wheel-spokes. The multiethnic character of the capital is attested by many sources from the time of Attaleiates' life but also from periods before and after the eleventh century. A tenth-century trades rule-book, the so-called *Book of the Eparch*, mentions Syrian merchants, while the twelfth-century Russian Primary Chronicle details the treaties that regulated the Viking traders' sojourn in the capital.¹¹ Scandinavian Runes can in fact still be seen on the marble banisters of Hagia Sophia, the majestic cathedral whose gigantic, solemn interior induced, some argued, the conversion of the Rus to Orthodox Christianity (Fig. 2.2).

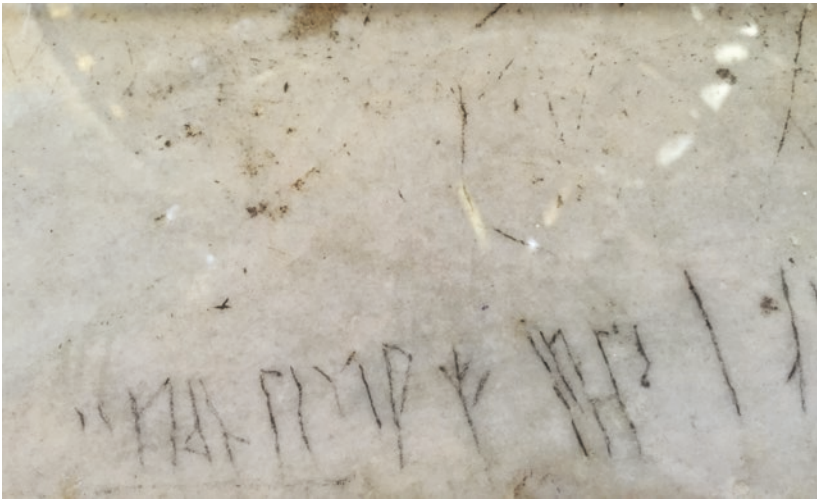


Fig. 2.2 A Nordic name carved on Hagia Sophia's marble banister

Saracen visitors to the capital found places of worship for Muslims, while Amalfitans made their presence felt in Constantinople almost a hundred years before the Venetians turned the northeastern part of the city into little Italy late in the eleventh century.¹² In fact, by the middle of the tenth century, the Amalfitans were so deeply enmeshed into society that Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos could lean on their support to reclaim the throne from the usurper dynasty of the Lekapenoi.¹³

If the streets of Constantinople teemed with life and presented the image of a medieval Babel, the situation was not substantially different in the palace grounds where one found mercenaries from the distant steppe, Varangian warriors from the Nordic lands of eternal darkness and even Muslim soldiers, all loyally serving in the imperial guard. Next to them one saw Norman mercenaries decorated with the insignia of high rank, Hellenized Bulgarian aristocrats chatting with silk-clad courtiers from southern Italy and Patzinak nobles living the life palatine as diplomatic hostages. Who is Roman and who barbarian in this rarefied realm? The Norman mercenary Rouselios was a defender of the empire's frontiers, a bearer of imperial titles, a friend of Roman courtiers, and the battlefield companion to Alexios Komnenos. Was he a barbarian or must we see in him a Roman citizen in the making? In any case, how are we to distinguish this foreigner from the philosopher Ioannes Italos with his broken Greek and, according to some, uncouth perhaps even barbarian manners?¹⁴

In the "Queen of Cities," as medieval Romans called their capital, visiting barbarians were not the only foreigners. Like a farm-boy from rural America arriving for the first time in New York, a provincial faced sensory overload but also moments of intense alienation in the streets of this pre-modern Gotham. From a small town of less than a thousand souls, he walks into a metropolis of half a million people and looks at monuments, people, and colors with fascination but also with a degree of suspicion. And yet this strange megalopolis was not completely alien. It was in fact, despite the pretensions of its people, a heady mix of provincialisms. The identity of its inhabitants was based on the adoption of a form of local urban snobbery, and yet, every newcomer joined circles formed along provincial and perhaps even ethnic lines.¹⁵ Such groups offered a sense of inclusion during what was for most recent arrivals a lonely if not outright alienating experience. They provided the comfort of a familiar accent, warmth that comes with sharing a common experience, and logistical support that made it possible to stay in touch with relatives in

one's often distant place of origin. At the palace—if our newcomer managed to enter this gated community through extensive studies, connections, and some luck—he faced the caustic comments of his competitors for imperial favor. He heard chatter about his Paphlagonian boorishness and his Isaurian grandfather's barbarity. Stories spread regarding the muddy streets and the hovels of his Mysian hometown, and the thieving customs of his Cretan relatives. All these comments, the suspicion and hostility he had to overcome by developing political reflexes and thicker skin, were uttered by men who themselves had been Armenian heretics, Saracen enemies of Christ, Italian barbarians, and sons of fallen Bulgarian aristocrats in a past not so very distant. This is the environment, which Attaleiates and others like him, who eventually came to play a role in operating Romanía's administrative machinery, had to negotiate. We will revisit this world in chapters to come. For now, we turn to a number of themes and issues that set the parameters for our eleventh-century journey.

THEMES AND QUESTIONS IN THE STUDY OF THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

It is an undeniable fact that Basileios II, the so-called Bulgar-slayer, is the measure against which historians have analyzed eleventh-century events and judged the men and women who shaped history in the course of that eventful hundred years. Coming to power at the end of a long period during which Romanía re-conquered territories, which in a distant past had belonged to the Roman state, Basileios II soon became a model for others to emulate. Having ruled for nearly fifty years, he is credited with the final defeat and conquest of the powerful Bulgarian kingdom, the consolidation of the empire's finances, as well as the ruthless subjugation of an unruly, overbearing, and often oppressive Roman aristocracy. Important laws that sought to protect smallholding farmers from local strongmen and richer well-connected neighbors confirmed a reputation for tough justice noted and appreciated over the centuries by medieval and modern scholars alike.

Basileios' state was therefore strong, rich, and inclined to be just toward the sea of farmers, who were, as in most pre-modern societies, the majority of its subjects. What followed in the years after his reign, however, slowly but surely undid much of what he had achieved. That modern historians more or less share this assessment is not accidental.

Histories and chronicles written at the time, the medieval equivalent of our newspapers of record, have each for their own reasons highlighted Basileios' virtues. In doing so, they pitted his successors against a quasi-canonized archetype, thus ensuring that they would fall short no matter what they did while on the throne. Thus those emperors who added territories to the empire did so without measuring the possible adverse effects of expansion. Conversely, those who lost lands needed little else to damn their memory than the loss itself of Roman soil to the barbarians. Even those who attempted with prudent actions to preserve the polity and reform the state were plagued by personal faults that made it impossible to favorably stand in comparison with the great man. No greater accolade could a historian award an emperor of this time than that he or she had surpassed Basileios in this or that aspect of their reigns. In short, Basileios' memory conditioned the way historians wrote about the eleventh century.¹⁶

If on the surface it appears that Basileios was in complete control of the empire's fate for the period of his reign, blazing a path through history and directing the fates of Mediterranean people, reality was of course rather more complicated. His political dominance over Romanía had only come after bloody civil wars fought early in his reign and already during his lifetime in distant areas of the Eurasian landmass; far beyond the Roman horizon, events were set in motion that would in time affect the empire.¹⁷ Our attention is drawn toward two major points on the compass. Out of northwestern France, the Normans sailed north to change the history of the English isles. Yet, even as most eventually chose the familiar rainy north and the shores of Old England, some had taken the journey south toward the sun earlier in the eleventh century. This second group would in time deprive Romanía of her Italian possessions after years of bold politics, backstabbing, and blitzkrieg. From the east and the Eurasian plains rode the other two major threats to the Roman polity. Out of the sea of tall grass that was the steppe, two large tribal agglomerations, the Patzinakoi and the Seljuqs, pushed toward Roman frontiers from north to east.¹⁸

Of the two, the Patzinakoi were the better known to authorities in Constantinople, having established by the eleventh century a presence of nearly two hundred years on Romanía's diplomatic horizon. Already in the tenth century, Emperor Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos had written about this nation and its place on the diplomatic chessboard in a handbook he later dedicated to his son Romanos.¹⁹ By the eleventh

century, these ferocious itinerant warriors found themselves under pressure from other westward-moving nomadic people and sought refuge behind the protective line of the Danube, within Balkan territories that the empire had only recently re-conquered. If the river frontier in the area had been quiet in the final years of Basileios II's reign, the same was not true in the years to come. One emperor, Isaakios I Komnenos, personally campaigned against the Patzinakoi, while numerous generals, some of whom, like Romanos Diogenes and Nikephoros Botaneiates, became emperors themselves, built their reputations in wars against this enemy. Romanía rid herself of this threat only during the reign of Alexios Komnenos, who crushed them in 1094 and integrated the defeated Patzinak warriors and their families in its social fabric but two years before the arrival of the knights of the first Crusade in the Balkans.

A most detailed Byzantine reference to the second nomadic threat faced by the empire appears in a late eleventh-century source. In his *Synopsis Historion*, a junior contemporary of Attaleiates, the fellow judge Ioannes Skylitzes, offers an account of the Seljuqs' entry into the Near East.²⁰ Skylitzes, who is truly well informed for one writing so soon after the arrival of the Turks in the empire's neighborhood, focused his attention on the Seljuq statesman Togrul Beg, who in the years after Basileios II's death led his nation from Central Asia and modern-day Turkmenistan to the empire's southern frontiers. Sweeping in his path the powerful state of the Ghaznavids, which at the time dominated an area from India and Afganistan all the way to Iran, Togrul Beg conquered in quick succession the remains of the caliphate in Mesopotamia, as well as Syria and Palestine. The first Seljuq raiders probed the Byzantine frontier in the mid- to late 1040s, and in their initial encounter with the empire's forces, the nomads did not prove much of a menace. This was to change soon as a result of the Romans' misguided, if perhaps understandable policy of partial, peacetime demilitarization.

In the west, up until the 1040s, the empire remained poised to re-conquer Sicily. Before his death, Basileios II had drawn up plans for the re-occupation of the island, whose last significant Roman outpost was embarrassingly lost to Muslim forces under the watch of the founder of the Macedonian dynasty, his namesake and forefather Basileios I. This policy was not abandoned in the ensuing years. During the reign of Michael IV (r. 1037–1042), a strong expeditionary force landed on Sicily. Normans and Varangian warriors, along with Roman regiments,

served under the valiant and by all accounts imposing figure of Georgios Maniakes, a general who had already proven himself in the empire's eastern frontier. The campaign would in all likelihood have been successful had Maniakes, who lacking decorum had insulted a relative of the prime minister, not faced accusations of disloyalty at court that resulted in his recall and imprisonment in the capital.

Maniakes returned to Southern Italy under Michael V in 1042 to deal with the emerging Norman threat. Soon, however, the politics of Constantinople caught up with him once again. Michael V was toppled by a popular rebellion, Konstantinos Monomachos joined Zoe on the throne, and a new commander was sent to replace Maniakes. The fierce general overreacted and killed this man, putting himself in an impossible position. Rather than face his accusers, Maniakes rebelled and marched against Constantinople. At the moment of triumph in the decisive encounter with imperial troops in the Balkans, he was killed. The long-term goal for the re-integration of Sicily in Romanía died with him, sacrificed on the altar of palace politics and intrigues.²¹ At the time, Maniakes' death appeared like a terrible missed opportunity. The poet Christophoros Mytilinaios composed this verse epitaph for the general's grave to capture the loss

I Maniakes speak from the grave to all men:
I did not leave my valour on earth but buried it
underground as I departed and I interred it with me.
It lies not far from my limbs, like another body,
staying somewhere near the sinews of my arms,
not wishing to ascend from the netherworld without me.²²

Significantly, the Maniakes affair also intersects with some of the earlier Norman inroads into Italy. At this stage, the small band of roving North European knights was no threat to Roman possessions in Southern Italy. They were merely mercenaries seeking employment in the service of the empire's regional military commanders. Soon, however, this changed, as Roman policies in Italy proved terribly shortsighted. Unfortunately, we cannot craft a convincing narrative that would explain Constantinople's response to Italian affairs since for reasons that remain elusive to this day, Italy falls out of the Byzantine historians' horizon, soon after the Sicilian fiasco. It appears that with crisis on every frontier, authors, much like their emperors, could only tackle one threat at a time in their books.

The Normans proved adept players in the European geopolitical chessboard. They effectively manipulated weaknesses and fluidity in the continent's interlocking systems of power in order to establish themselves as major players. A team of well-led, talented, and extremely disciplined warriors combined the sensitivity and diplomatic skills of its leaders with the devastating impetus of its cavalry charge in order to conquer territory and then ably mobilize the resources and populations within their domain. They created in Southern Italy and Sicily a hybrid state that combined Norman, Greek, Latin-Italian and Arabic socio-cultural and administrative traditions, and proved a major player in the Mediterranean for the next century and a half, assuming a central role in the Crusades. In the process, they also became a thorn on the Roman emperor's side. There was nothing inevitable, however, in the rise of the Normans. One false step on the part of their various leaders from Drogo to Robert Guiscard, one lost battle, could have undone the best laid Norman plans and spared the empire major troubles in Italy. Yet the simple fact that they proved successful attests to their skill as leaders—fortune favors the able after all—and to the crisis, political and military but also broadly social that the empire experienced in the latter part of the eleventh century.

Of the three foreign threats discussed above, only the Petzinakoi were more or less discernible in 1025. The other two would emerge within thirty years from Basileios' death. The internal causes of the empire's crisis, on the other hand, had been but temporarily suppressed during Basileios' reign. His authoritarian style of rule and the power of the crown during his reign pushed society's reflexive responses to this unprecedented concentration of power underground, without, however, eliminating the causes of disaffection. Tensions between the centralizing state structures, which under Basileios became ever more efficient and intrusive, and different alliances of interests could not have remained dormant for too long. Old political players, such as the military officer class—effectively trimmed and reshaped by Basileios during the course of almost twenty years of civil wars—as well as new, like the rising urban strata of merchants and service providers in general, now openly expressed demands that put great stress on Byzantine governance. Not having developed the institutional framework wherein such demands could be channeled and addressed, the empire's political system bulked under pressure from an active and assertive society. The resultant domestic instability materialized at a time when the polity confronted

the combined threat of the Normans, the Patzinakoi, and the Seljuqs. By the reign of Monomachos, the combined cost of domestic clientelism and foreign war was getting out of control. In an attempt to save the budget, the emperor deployed both fiscal and monetary measures to redress the balance.²³ For a while, it appeared to be working, but only just. One could argue that while Basileios won wars in the fields of battle, his successors, under considerably deteriorating international conditions, started losing them in streets, *fora*, and on the treasury ledgers.

With the empire in crisis, Byzantinists for years sought explanations for the problems faced by Basileios II's mighty state. In this chapter, I have already alluded to the emphasis of early writers on the role of individual historical agents, who planned and executed those policies that led to the demise of the medieval Roman polity. Byzantine historians and authors of the time walk us through a history studded with events planned by men, executed by men, and suffered by men (women and children). Their writings are even organized according to reigns of emperors thus forcing us to assess historical developments within a set framework that privileges the individual and his, and on occasion her, actions. From their work, however, and more specifically from Michael Psellos' *Chronographia*, which until recently was the only text available in accessible English and French translations, modern historians also draw another analytical tool. Psellos teaches us to look at the empire's crisis as the outcrop of factional struggle between the courtly, urban aristocracy that staffed the bureaucracy on the one hand and the provincial military aristocrats on the other. While not useless, this distinction has been shown to collapse once the historian engages further with the evidence. Even Psellos, who introduced it and is to this day sometimes hailed as a representative of the "civilian" party, wrote in fact in support of military aristocrats. And yet, the protean courtier participated in a coup against the warrior Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes and claimed responsibility for his blinding, despite the fact that the latter was one of the representatives of that same class whose grievances against the "civilian" party Psellos professed to understand. Alliances in the real world were evidently less straightforward than we imagine in our academic desire for neat categorizations.

Analysis, which focuses on straightforward distinctions between competing factions, fails, therefore, to reflect the complex arrangements of interest that took place within the elite on the basis of personal, cultural, as well as other criteria. It is for this reason that a biographical approach

becomes essential. The focus on members of Attaleiates' class allows us to touch upon all manner of relationship and interaction that he and other members of his social environment had with men and women further up or down the Byzantine social pyramid. Such relations appear, even if at times only faintly, in his writings and are examined here. Thus the study of Attaleiates, Mytilinaios, Mauropous, and Psellos within the social context in which they flourished sheds light on our period in its political, social, economic, and even cultural dimensions.

SOME FACTS AND A FEW EVENTS

The death of Basileios II the so-called Bulgar-slayer did not stir the Byzantine ship of state. His co-reigning brother Konstantinos, for years happy with the name if not the reality of power, stepped without incident into Basileios' shoes. Contemporaries have sketched a mostly unflattering portrait of Konstantinos VIII.²⁴ Once we peel off the rhetorical element from those accounts, he emerges as an exacting fiscal administrator who dealt in a harsh manner with all real or imagined threats to his reign. Moreover, he was true to the spirit of his brother in his implacable hostility toward the empire's military class. Our sources nevertheless indicate that unlike his brother he avoided military ventures preferring diplomacy when interacting with the wider world beyond the empire's borders. Overall, Konstantinos' three-year reign changed little in terms of institutions, leaving the empire's international status undiminished. Like a figure on a Byzantine icon the emperor's portrait sketched out here is rather two dimensional and devoid of depth. Certain variations, however, in Psellos' brushstroke add pathos and perspective to Konstantinos' character, setting us before a rather more fascinating human profile. Thus we learn that Konstantinos liked to cook, flirted with beautiful women, fought with wrestlers, and loved to toss the dice. This list of personal quirks and habits does not account for the empire's foreign policy and domestic affairs. It betrays, however, an interest on the part of the historian and his audience in the private aspects of people's lives, which is characteristic of the nascent eleventh-century humanism.

Konstantinos' death brought to the fore his daughters Zoe and Theodora, who inherited the Macedonian dynasty's immense prestige. Basileios' nieces capitalized on their popularity and carved out for themselves a unique role in both politics and in matters of imperial succession.

The two sisters were often at odds with one another but nevertheless directly affected the fates of four consecutive emperors over nearly three decades. The first successor to Konstantinos was Romanos III Argyros. Psellos again dips his pen in bile and composes an account of this first one of Zoe's husbands as a man who combined unbounded if comical ambition with an uncanny knack for failure. During his reign, the empire suffered its first humiliating military defeat in more than half a century at the hands of Muslims and the prestige of Roman arms was temporarily compromised.

Yet, once Psellos' rhetorical politicking is set aside, reality proves kinder to Romanos. During his reign, the state apparatus was more or less in the hands of the diabolically effective Ioannes Orphanotrophos, a man bred in the air of administrative efficiency that breezed through Basileios' court. Thus despite Romanos' profligate spending on churches, monasteries, and almshouses, the state finances remained in good order. Even the supposed dilution of Macedonian laws protecting poor farmers may in fact have been overstated.²⁵ What is instead evident in Romanos' reign is the attempt to shore up his position on the throne—a position he ultimately owed to his wife Zoe—by reinforcing his links to the church and the population of the capital, the two main recipients of his benefactions. This turn to the sovereign power of the people betrays Romanos' discomfort with the established and highly intertwined bureaucratic and military officialdom. It is an indication of Romanos' relative weakness at court but also a reflection on the weight of popular opinion in the empire's politics. The people, who by the end of Basileios' reign appeared reined in, now once again emerge as essential allies of imperial power. Soon, claimants to the throne would rise from among their ranks.

Romanos eventually fell prey to his prime minister, Ioannes Orphanotrophos. Ioannes introduced to the court his youthful brother Michael who won the empress' heart. Overlooked by the indifferent emperor, who himself kept a mistress, the shift of Zoe's amorous attentions and allegiance spelled his demise. A web of conspiracy was spun, Romanos' dead body was found floating in the palace bathhouse, and Michael shortly after became emperor. Mytilinaios wrote about this transition of power in a poem dedicated to the deceased emperor: "the people buried the corpse of their valiant emperor there, then they rushed to a new emperor and forgot about Romanos."²⁶ As suggested by the poet, Michael's rise to the pinnacle of power was uneventful, cloaked in the

aura of legitimacy bestowed upon him by Zoe, who was still popular in Constantinople. As for the empire's administrative apparatus, his brother the prime minister had it under his control. All Michael had to do was put on the purple imperial sandals. Despite scandalous beginnings, Michael's seven-year reign represents one of the bright moments in the political history of the eleventh century. Contemporary historians agree that he was dedicated to public service and to the defense of the state. Attaleiates even notes, in his account of the emperor's Balkan expedition in 1041, that though hampered by a weakened constitution—he suffered regular, debilitating epileptic fits—Michael IV had proved quicker than the legendary Basileios II in subjugating the rebelled Bulgarians. In the mid-1070s when Attaleiates wrote, the memory of Basileios' long reign was very much alive; it did not, however, completely overshadow other able leaders of the Roman polity.

In collaboration with his uncle Ioannes, Michael IV attempted to create a system of power, which would entrench their family in the state by neutralizing Zoe's popularity. Michael's relatives thus assumed important posts in government and high ranks at court. The poet Mytilinaios noted this effort and attempted to put a positive spin on this Byzantine display of nepotism in verses written for the court:

The radiant foursome of the brothers
forms the sign of the shining cross,
because the four men are the four parts of the cross
that rule the four directions of the world...²⁷

Since, however, Michael had no children of his own and Zoe was no longer in childbearing age, dynastic stability was by no means assured, it never truly was after all in the polity of the Romans. It was therefore Ioannes' considerable achievement that the empress was prevailed upon to adopt Michael's nephew and namesake, who was given the title of *Kaisar* and in effect became the emperor's presumptive heir.

When Michael IV died, his nephew was crowned emperor with Zoe by his side as empress and true source of imperial legitimacy. The new man, Michael V, was most certainly a son of the "Queen of Cities." Constantinopolitans knew him by his nickname, the caulker, which is itself indicative of his roots among the city's tradesmen. To Psellos, himself a new man, Michael's rise was an opportunity for brutal satire of those lowborn now occupying the commanding heights of Byzantine politics.

Psellos comprehensively caricatures Michael about whom we learn that he “was altogether devoid of glory and utterly obscure on his father’s line.” In fact, “his father issued from some completely deserted rural place or from another odd distant land” where “he neither sowed the land nor planted it.” Before we have time to wonder what this man did for a living, if tilling the earth had not been his thing, Psellos trots on to explain that there had been “no cattle, nor a flock of sheep or other herd to tend.” He was not even an estate manager we are told.

The land not doing Michael’s family any favors, he looked to the sea. Psellos cannot leave his subject un-teased and notes that he was not a merchant, a navigator, or even a harbor pilot. He rather entered the shipbuilding business where he did quite well. The reader needs to nevertheless be disabused of the idea that skilled labor was involved in Michael’s path to wealth, so Psellos enumerates all the crafts involved in shipbuilding only to explain that none of them could be associated with him. He was rather known for the following: “when others had conjoined the various pieces, he smeared pitch on the assembled parts with great skill.” A great fortune was thus made by way of caulking. In the era of opportunity that was the eleventh century, Michael’s rise in the Constantinopolitan social scene was smeared on the hulls of the capital’s merchantmen. Psellos notes that he personally witnessed “the metamorphosis” only to realize that Michael’s new exalted place in the capital’s social scene was by no means compatible with the man’s character and origins. “It was as if a pygmy strove to play Hercules and was trying to play demi-god... Clad in lion’s skin, he was weighed down by the club!”²⁸

One wonders, however, after reading Psellos’ bilious account if people on the street cared one iota that Michael’s family had held no property in Anatolia. Many of the empire’s aristocratic landowners had been hardened by careers in the army and life on the borders. Haughty and rough, they often showed little respect for the people in the capital. Other landowners were in effect new men. Much like the emperor himself, they came to money and fortune after successful careers in the trades or alternatively through service in the imperial administration. To the average citizen of the capital, the life experience and careers of those grandees spoke of fortune’s capricious ways, estates in Asia, and ancient lineages notwithstanding.

Michael instinctively understood that and from the early days of his reign set out to highlight his urban roots, thus strengthening his bonds

with this large and diverse constituency. Constantinople was, after all, teeming with a population whose loyalty to the emperor was important as ever for his survival on the throne. While every emperor understood well that he was in effect but the custodian of the polity, the exalted ruler of an ancient community of citizens, each nevertheless displayed distinct and changing attitudes toward the population of the capital. Thus, in the latter part of the tenth century, Nikephoros Phokas felt confident enough to quarter Armenian soldiers in the city. For this, he faced the wrath of the often-harassed Constantinopolitans, especially after he fortified the palace thus creating an island of military rule in a sea of spurned and discontented citizens.²⁹ By the middle of the eleventh century, such high-handed behavior was no longer an option. Emperors faced with the infinitely more complicated political landscape of what was in effect a newly prosperous, increasingly urban Mediterranean superpower turned to the *demos* for support. Doing so, they transformed the people's theoretical sovereignty into tangible political fact. In turn, the people developed a degree of self-confidence that allowed them to act collectively as supporters, but also, more ominously, as deponers of emperors.

By the eleventh century, a visit to the house of Toxaras—the imperial guard who assassinated Emperor Michael III in the ninth century—was part of a tourist itinerary, surely a cruel popular joke on emperors precariously perched on the throne.³⁰ The tension between imperial power and the sovereign people had long inflected Byzantine politics. What was new now was the readiness of historians to focus on such popular activity and foreground the emperor's attempt to court the *demos*. Michael V intuitively sensed the power of the populace and attempted to harness it to his ambition in order first to liberate himself from the influence of his uncle Ioannes and then marginalize Zoe. Seeking to bolster his own position on the throne by using the street, he misread popular sentiment and did not grasp the extent of the people's devotion to Basileios II's nieces. The people rose and toppled him, bringing to the fore Zoe's elder sister Theodora, who despite her age and an earlier oath of chastity that had confined her in a nunnery became custodian of the state for as long as the search for an appropriate emperor was afoot. Nikephoros Phokas' imperial fortress was no longer adequate protection against the raging sea of humanity that was the Constantinopolitan population in open revolt.

The massive popular rebellion that put an end to Michael V's regime left some 3000 men and women dead in the capital's looted city center.

And yet, perhaps for the first time in the empire's history, writers, who otherwise display little respect for the *demōs*, now cast it a sympathetic eye. Attaleiates, for example, evidently recognized the important constitutional role of the *demōs* by presenting their actions during the rebellion as a struggle against tyranny. Thus, in the *History*, the rebelled populace emerges as a quasi-lawful assembly of citizens with all the characteristics of a mature, right-thinking historical agent. His account points toward the maturation in contemporary thought of a conception of politics as an increasingly participative process. The Roman polity's latent republican theory was now turning into politically potent *praxis*. In an age of great men, the people of the street suddenly mattered.

With Theodora's interregnum and Zoe's eventual return to the palace, a new emperor comes to power: Konstantinos Monomachos. His reign witnesses a flourishing of letters and intellectual activity, reflected in the rise of the so-called quartet of wise men to the palace inner circle. These are the erudites Mauropous, Psellos, Leichoudes, and Xiphilinos. The relative longevity of Monomachos' regime and his effective defeat of all military-aristocratic threats to his reign gave the empire a sense of stability at a time when tectonic shifts were reshaping the international environment in which the polity lived. Mid-century Romanía was still viewed by its neighbors as the indisputable leader of the Mediterranean world. Increasingly, however, cracks appeared on the facade of Basileios's imposing imperial edifice. In this period of relative peace and prosperity, the empire was still invaded by the Patzinakoi in the north, by the Rus from the Black Sea, and by flying columns of Seljuq Turkish raiders at a time when internal politics were about to turn "interesting." While not one of those enemies managed to wrest lands from the empire, which in fact expanded its territories, their appearance is a foretaste of the crisis to follow.

The reign of Monomachos has to this day been read with an eye on the perceived decline of the empire's defenses. A recent study comprehensively and to my mind convincingly challenged such a reading by showing the emperor actively and, more or less, effectively addressing the empire's foreign policy challenges. Monomachos' management of war was therefore energetic and thoughtful, much like his attempts at domestic reform. The latter were less controversial at the time, and as a consequence, modern scholars have also treated them with interest and even approval.³¹

The emperor's reforms in the fields of education and law boosted the empire's social and intellectual life, while reinforcing the idea of the

Roman polity as a realm of justice. The *Consul of the Philosophers*, a new teaching position established in the capital as a reward for services rendered to the emperor by Michael Psellos, was a most public affirmation of imperial interest in letters. The post firmly pinned the discipline of philosophy in popular consciousness by reinforcing the platonic adage of the philosopher as an essential advisor to the powers that be. In the eyes of an influential and expanding segment of the elite, the emperor's open support for Psellos no doubt provided legitimacy for the philosopher's tendency to look at nature and the place of man in it outside the narrow confines of religious doctrine. This move, quite naturally, did not escape scrutiny on the part of the more inflexible elements in the camp of religious orthodoxy. The teachings of the *Consul of the Philosophers* stirred passions and Psellos found himself the target of dangerous political attacks. To counter this conservative offensive and deflect potentially damaging accusations of heterodoxy, the man of reason voluntarily donned the monastic habit. And yet, despite such reactions, by mid-century, the capital's intellectual life brimmed with debate and creativity. Thinkers and writers of the period that follows are to a large extent Psellos' intellectual offspring, beneficiaries of Monomachos' "investments" in the realm of education.

In the field of justice, the new teaching post of the *Guardian of the Laws* (*nomophylax*) and the foundation of the *Office on Judicial Verdicts* (*epi ton Kriseon*) were signs of the emperor's desire to rationalize and streamline the operation of the empire's courts. The more important *Office on Judicial Verdicts* undertook the supervision of provincial courts and occupied itself with efforts to uniformly apply the law on the lands of the empire. This attempt to impose a homogenous and cohesive system of justice across the territories of the empire must not be seen as just another propaganda campaign by a ruler seeking to portray himself as just. It was rather a response to the increasing demands by a vibrant civil society for effective and just operation of the state's mechanisms. There were surely obstacles on the path to a just polity. The clash between the *Guardian of the Laws* Ioannes Xiphilinos and the conservative legal establishment of the capital soon led this position into desuetude.³² This failure does not, however, detract from the emperor's effort. Monomachos' rule must in fact be seen as moment in history when a real opening of Roman society became likely. Attaleiates, whose life and activity we follow in this book, was a product of this period, educated in an intellectual universe defined by Psellos and joining the world of

jurisprudence right at the time when Monomachos stirred things up in the realm of the law.

As the emperor neared the end of his life, the bill for the expansive clientelist policy of Basileios's successors and the recent wars in three fronts was delivered to the treasury. Attaleiates tells us that as Monomachos came closer to death, he instituted a harsh taxing regime, attacking among others the monasteries and their extensive properties. To an emperor who had promoted justice and education, an attack on the wealth of indolent, landholding obscurantists surely made sense. The body politic was by no means offended, his young cadres approved, the empire appeared to prosper—the newly challenging international situation notwithstanding.

After Konstantinos' death, Theodora assumed sole control of the empire. The reign of this last one of the Macedonian princesses was short but is nevertheless described with some admiration by Psellos. Attaleiates too had kind words for her efforts to run the state, focusing on her most influential minister, the cleric, and bureaucrat Leon Paraspondylos.³³ Upon her death, a year or so later palace circles crowned a new emperor, the elderly, honest, and agreeable Michael the so-called Old Man (*Geron*). Contemporary historians treated his short stint on the throne as a preamble for the rise of the military class' darling, the rebel and future Emperor Isaakios Komnenos. There is little cause for the modern scholar to do otherwise.

Isaakios treated the empire's creeping military and fiscal challenges with due concern. He was after all the first soldier to take the throne since the death of Ioannes Tzimiskes some eighty years before his reign. From his first days as emperor, Isaakios understood that new pressures on the empire's frontier imposed a tighter fiscal policy on the overextended treasury. His measures, which included cuts in the officialdom's salary roster, were thus aimed at collecting the revenue necessary to bolster the empire's increasingly challenged defences. The tax-authorities were mobilized and assessors sent to the provinces to collect pending debts. In Constantinople, the state's bureaux pored over reams of documents, re-examining previously granted tax-privileges and rescinding much that was awarded thoughtlessly in earlier times of plenty. Isaakios' policies were strict but mainly directed toward large landed estates and monastic property. The flourishing urban classes, living in the empire's newly booming cities, do not appear to have been touched much by his measures. Psellos and Attaleiates, both

likely affected by Isaakios' trimming of state salaries, openly expressed their admiration for him. They even ironically emphasized the positive social effects of his attack on monastic property. The two authors in fact gleefully spoke of the opportunities this measure offered for monks to live a true life of frugality and Christian poverty.³⁴ Isaakios, however, did not limit himself to cost cutting. He also led the army to battle and attempted a broader reorganization of the state. Yet, precisely because he stirred the pot, perhaps a bit too briskly, the emperor did face a bloodless palace coup. He resigned from the throne to retire in a monastery and passed the reins of the state to his close confidant and associate Konstantinos Doukas, who ranked among the organizers of his ouster.

This former ally and supporter of Isaakios proved inert in running the army, while completely failing to grasp the magnitude of external threats to the empire's defenses and territories. Under Konstantinos' reign, the Seljuq Turks expanded their destructive raids on the empire's tax base in Asia Minor, while the Patzinakoi once again crossed the Danube bringing chaos to the northern Balkans. All the while, attacks from Aleppo into Syria put Antioch, one of the empire's largest urban centers, under immense pressure. Such failure to act in view of clear and present danger to the state is all the more surprising given Doukas' earlier presence in Isaakios' inner circle. Ironically, this indolent emperor came from the ranks of the army. Having thus left the ship of state listless at a time when it faced waves of challenges on its borders and in its increasingly overrun provinces, Konstantinos also complicated the domestic front with his deathbed decisions. With his eldest son Michael still a minor, the empress Eudokia, his mother, was sworn to celibacy in an effort to confine succession within the Doukas household. The capital's political class was similarly bound by this inconvenient oath to the dying emperor.

The empress' desire to avoid a full-blown military revolt like the one that swept Michael VI the Old Man from power but a few years back, now brought Romanos Diogenes to the fore. By marrying herself to this dynamic, conveniently handsome and manly generalissimo, Eudokia attempted to protect her children's rights to the throne from other ambitious members of the military aristocracy. At the same time, she was offering the polity what everyone seems to have been calling for: a military solution to the depredations on the empire's lands by its nomadic enemies.³⁵ The return to peace was to take place in the only manner which, at the time, everyone recognized as effective: the methodic

reconstitution of the army. Diogenes himself knew that the only hope for the restoration of Byzantine arms and prestige was constant training. The campaigns he led in 1068 and 1069 in Syria and Asia Minor exposed the troops to the enemy under controlled circumstances in preparation for a larger decisive operation that was to put an end to the painful raids. That final expedition was timed for 1071 and its eventual failure was to have dire consequences for the empire. This chapter is not the venue for a detailed analysis of Romanos' strategy. One should simply note that one August afternoon, three years of meticulous planning and ceaseless training were thrown to the wind when the commander of the army's rearguard, Andronikos Doukas, betrayed Romanos. The empire's expeditionary force suffered decisive defeat and the emperor found himself the Sultan's captive. Once again, enmities and clashes at the level of the court were having nefarious effects on the empire's ability to defend itself. In the words of Attaleiates

the Romans of our times... their leaders and emperors commit the worst crimes and God-detested deeds under the pretext of the public interest. The commander of the army cares not one whit for the war nor does what is right and proper by his fatherland, and even shows contempt for the glory of victory; instead, he bends his whole self to the making of profit, converting his command into a mercantile venture, and so he brings neither prosperity nor glory to his own people.³⁶

Widening our field of vision, it is necessary to point out that Romanos' policies had mostly been focused in Asia Minor at a time when important developments were afoot in Italy. After years of losses to the enterprising and combative Normans, the empire did not in the late 1060s have the resources to mount an effective two-front fight. Romanos dispatched reinforcements to the besieged garrison at Bari but otherwise allowed Roman possessions in Italy to slip out of the empire's control. We have seen that Romania had in the past contemplated the expansion of her authority in the west with campaigns for the re-conquest of Sicily under Basileios II, Michael IV, and Konstantinos IX. In the later eleventh century, its western possessions were lost. For reasons scholars have yet to explain, chroniclers and historians of the time refer to those events only in *passim*. While it would be unfair to accuse the empire's rulers of diplomatic and strategic myopia, it is true that their near exclusive attention on what was the immediately pressing eastern front allowed for

the growth of powers in the west, which in time proved dangerous for Romanía.

With Romanos' defeat at Mantzikert and his subsequent deposition, we enter a period of civil strife, which only ends with the rise of Alexios Komnenos to the throne in 1081. Ten years of violent introspection resulted in the loss of nearly all of the empire's possessions in Asia Minor (Fig. 2.3).

The Seljuqs occupied much of it; the rest remained in Roman hands but in a state of autonomy from Constantinople. We will not at this point treat in detail the reigns of Michael VII Doukas and Nikephoros III Botaneiates, as they are intricately linked to Attaleiates' own biography and will therefore be discussed in the coming chapters. Yet it is perhaps necessary to note that in this time of profound crisis the government in Constantinople attempted to reclaim the empire's western territories through a clever process of co-option. A plan put forward by Romanos Diogenes was picked up by Michael Doukas' advisors who sought to wed the Roman heir to the throne in Constantinople to the daughter of the Norman leader, Robert Guiscard, thus assuring his integration into Romanía's court and military establishment.³⁷ The plan, which was set in motion in the Queen of Cities and agreed upon by



Fig. 2.3 Map of Romanía in 1081

the Norman leader, only failed when Nikephoros Botaneiates toppled Michael Doukas putting an end to the betrothal and proposed marriage. This reversal provided the Normans the pretext for their later invasion of Romanía's territories. It is likely that in the years before the Crusades but also later, no Roman historian was willing to dwell into the political minefield that was Italy. The eventual end of this betrothal and the grave diplomatic fallout associated with it does not, however, detract from the audacity of Byzantine diplomats, who could still at this critical time imagine bold solutions to the empire's problems. The sheer fact that authorities in the empire's capital could envisage the integration of a large group of foreign aristocrats and warriors into Romanía's imperial order attests to the dynamism of Roman society and the confidence of its leaders in its assimilative powers.

This ability of the courtly elite to imagine solutions to the empire's pressing military problems and the actual transfer of such a plan from the realm of imagination to that of practice bring us to the central theme of this book. We focus here on Michael Attaleiates, who by recording events that marked the empire's history during his lifetime did not simply offer an account of the past but rather provided his readers with a complex political statement. Attaleiates' *History* suggests a number of explanations for the causes of Roman decline. His approach to historical causation places him at the center of a lively debate on the empire's trajectory from glory to disaster and on the type of politics and policies necessary for the restoration of the Roman polity. In another book, I focused on the political uses of Attaleiates' historical writings and on the central place of history in eleventh-century politics. Here I examine the biographical data, which allow us to imagine him as a member and representative of the class of courtiers and administrators who played a part in shaping the political landscape of the empire in the third quarter of the eleventh century.

Attaleiates and his peers were to larger or lesser degree behind the successes and failures of the medieval Roman state. They influenced emperors, shaped policy, developed and disseminated propaganda, put into effect tax-policy, and build up the legal apparatus with which the empire sought to protect its subjects from all manner of abuse. While not heroic in the manner of the warrior Romanos Diogenes and his fellow combatants from among the ranks of the army, officials like Attaleiates were what distinguished Romanía from other European and Asian polities of the Middle Ages. They colored its culture and, quill in hand,

created the portraits of the main historical actors that modern historians study. They deserve therefore to have their story told. This book is about one of them but also, in effect, about them all.

NOTES

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 21. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 9–11, Bekker 9; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historion*, pp. 381–3. Thurn, p. 405–6 on Maniakes' operations.
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33. Psellos, *Chronographia*, VII—Theodora—4 (Renaud, p. 73, lines 3–12), for a translation of this passage see Sewter, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, p. 262.
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Paper, Parchment, and Ink: The Sources for Attaleiates' Biography

From May seventh to May fourteen 1079 a document bearing the signature of Emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates was copied six times and deposited in as many different bureaus in Constantinople. The copies made of paper, standard chancery stationary at the time, were filed with those *sekreta* of the imperial administration responsible for ensuring that Attaleiates' property would remain exempt of all manner of dues to the state. The decree sought to burn a temporary hole on the fiscal map of the empire at the exact spot where Attaleiates' property was located. As far as the Roman army, the Constantinopolitan tax authorities and the agents of the patriarch were concerned, as far as the imperial post, the navy and the fiscal officers of the empire knew this land did not exist. A copy of this imperial decree in parchment, with the golden seal of the emperor affixed upon it, was given to Attaleiates himself, to add to his personal archive, proof that he was indeed immune of some, though by no means all, of the most onerous impositions on private property. His secretary Ioannes, a trusted member of Attaleiates' household for years, copied the imperial decree to the back of a little book, where space was left for appending such important documents.¹ The booklet itself, one of two copies, was likely deposited in the cell of the monastery's bursar. As a historian writing with relish of emperors who rescinded privileges granted by exactly this type of document to other people's lands and properties, Attaleiates was admittedly intellectually dishonest in his pursuit of this kind of exemption.² The judge's hope that, unlike so many others who had failed, he would use his connections at court to stir

the fiscal authorities of the empire away from his lands was also evidence of deep rooted optimism. In that, he was no different than most people with some influence in the polity of the Romans. His estate was not to be the only hole on the empire's fiscal map.

The booklet mentioned above had a brown, thick, leather cover and was some hundred pages long, the size of the glossy pocket travel books we carry on our trips around the world. It was made of thin, soft, and smooth parchment of yellowish color. Attaleiates would have spent somewhere around a *nomisma* and a half of old issue gold coins, or up to five of the new devalued issues of Emperor Nikephoros III, to procure the materials used for this little document. Just about a fourth of a poor worker's annual salary went into this miniature celebration of tax exemption and privilege. It is conceivable that Attaleiates personally supervised the process leading to the production of these pages, as he no doubt did when he ordered the materials for the codex on which he had his own *History* set as a gift to that same elderly emperor. This little book then was a "constitution" for a monastery, which Attaleiates created in 1075 in an effort to sacralize his personal property, thus securing it from the exacting administrators who served the bankrupt and increasingly corrupt Roman state. Known as the *Diataxis*, it is a set of rules and stipulations regarding the operation of this pious foundation, as well as an accurate description of all the possessions of the monastery (Fig. 3.1).

This unassuming document, currently in the National Library in Athens, gracefully bearing purple-bluish marks of humidity and in need of careful restorative work, is a source of singular importance for those who seek to understand the man recognized by scholars as one of three major historians of the eleventh century. Its value extends well beyond the information it offers regarding the organization of monastic life in the middle Byzantine period and the details it provides regarding Attaleiates' career. It is above all a direct material connection with the man himself. Ironically, Attaleiates has left us at least three items that he had touched with his own hands. One of them is the *Diataxis*. When I held the manuscript in my hands in the summer of 2004, after kind permission from the helpful staff of the National Library, I was able to imagine a direct connection to the man who lived a millennium before our time and had become the object of my studies. Carefully opening the book on its 62nd folio, I found myself staring at his autograph signature which reads as follows:

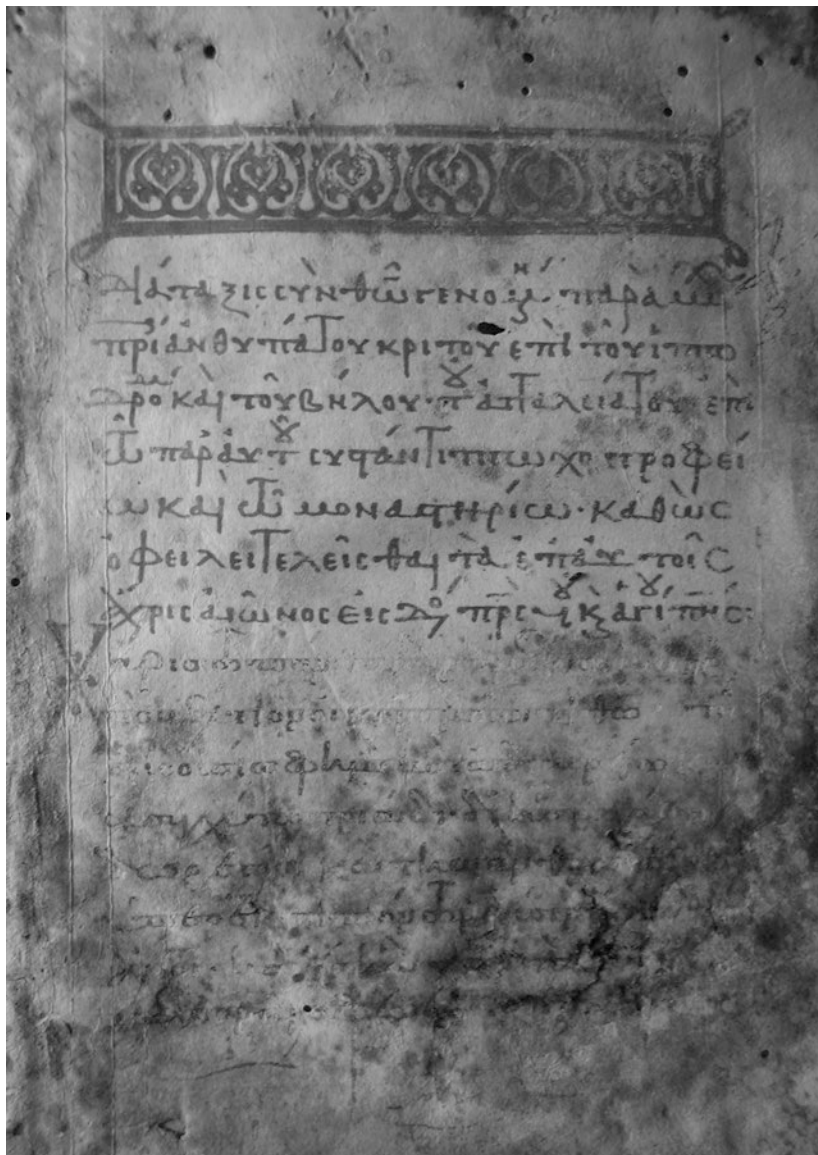


Fig. 3.1 Opening page of Attaleiates' *Diataxis*

I, Michael Attaleiates, *patrikios*, *anthypatos*, judge of the hippodrome and the *velum*, confirming all the above [provisions], with God's help, and wanting them to remain inviolable, have appended my signature and seal, in the month of March, fifteenth indiction, of the year 6585 (1077 CE).³

This was the handwriting of the judge, the same hand, which would have appeared on hundreds of legal briefs and decisions floating about Constantinople and the provinces of the empire. The same hand in which the first and now lost draft of the *History*, his work on Romania's political and military fortunes from 1035 to 1079 was likely written. Modern scholars rarely have the opportunity to come that close to their medieval subject. Some authors do give us more than others. Readers of Eloise and Abelard's letters, or for that matter, readers of Psellos' writings about his family enjoy very direct insights into the minds of their subjects. In the case of Attaleiates, however, we have a tactile link to the man and to the people closest to him, who would have handled this little booklet.

While the *Diataxis*' manuscript is an elegant if fragile and sadly decaying interface between medieval judge and modern reader, the little booklet is more than an aesthetically pleasing object from a bygone age. It is primarily a treasure trove of information regarding Attaleiates' life. As a handbook dispensing rules that regulated the lives of the monks inducted in Attaleiates' monastery, it also sheds light on the lives of the founder and his family and bears the imprint of his worldview. While resources dedicated to this pious foundation were drawn from a personal estate built up over years of public service, the purpose itself of this particular "investment" in piety was the perpetual celebration of the founder's life and family.⁴ If, then, one page of the *Diataxis* recorded in detail the assets that Attaleiates allocated for such commemoration, another reminisced about relatives he had left behind him at the port-city of Attaleia, while yet a third spoke of gratitude to his loving parents.

Pious disclaimers notwithstanding, Attaleiates was proud of his origins and professional achievement. The *Diataxis* is therefore as much a celebration of his career, as it is a sacred textual shield protecting his property. With the temporal and the transcendental coexisting in its pages, this text can be used for the reconstruction of his social, economic, and family life, while also offering a rough outline of his career. It is, however, still an incomplete record. The *Diataxis* reveals all manner of detail pertaining to Attaleiates' life and its stipulations offer insights into

his thoughts and worldview. Nevertheless, much remains unsaid. We thus learn about Attaleiates' desire to celebrate the memory of his two deceased wives and parents, yet we possess no information regarding the dates or places of their deaths. We learn of sisters living in Attaleia, but little about their offspring and family other than the fact that the judge wanted to ensure they would never challenge his son's descendants for control of the monastery.⁵ In the words of a famous modern obscurantist, there are known unknowns and unknown unknowns associated with Attaleiates' life that we are unable to access through this medieval text alone.

The *Diataxis*, however, opens a different fascinating door into Attaleiates' world. Next to instructions about the recruitment of the monastery's complement of monks, but a few pages after detailed provisions regarding the portions of food that would sustain them, the reader finds a list of books owned by this pious foundation. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of those works are of religious content. Only three, a book on earthquake and thunder, a history of the Capture of Jerusalem by Josephus, and a copy of Attaleiates' own *History* on chancery-grade cotton paper are works of secular nature. Yet, this list also records the names of the owners of some of the purchased books and thus links Attaleiates by way of the book market with known figures of the court. The little book on thunder and earthquakes in particular opens a whole new world of enquiry and offers an intriguing peek into the judge's interest in the occult and in divination.

Attaleiates' books, both those recorded in the *Diataxis* and others kept at his home, for which we have little to no direct evidence, bring us to the one work for which the judge is mostly known among scholars, the *History*. Recent work on the *History* has revealed evidence of extensive classical influence on the author. Attaleiates readily uses quotes borrowed from the father of history Herodotos, the first "scientific" historian Thucydides, and the soldier-writer Xenophon. Scholars have identified in his work excerpts from later-day Greek writers such as Diodoros of Sicily, Polybios and Dionysios of Halicarnassos. He also seems to have read the sixth-century work of Agathias and that of Leon Diakonos, a writer of the tenth century, whose history may at least to some extent have been an inspiration for his own text. When it comes to literary texts, Attaleiates quotes from Euripides' *Andromache* and *Medea*, evidence perhaps of a fascinating interest in tragic women, and in the effects of war on families. At the same time, he also often shows

appreciation for the lighter side of things as attested by his casual use of lines from Aristophanes and the master ancient soap opera, the comedian Menandros.⁶

According to a rapidly changing scholarly prejudice regarding the use of classical texts by Byzantine authors, Attaleiates' classicism was the by-product of a rigid educational curriculum aimed at creating competent parrots of revered ancient cultural artifacts. Byzantine authors have not always been treated as curious intellectuals delving into the fascinating world of antique culture. They were classical ventriloquists, performing elaborate literary tricks for pretentious "consumers" of oratory and text at court. While we can enjoy the masters of classical literature, retaining our distance from them and producing our own modern masterpieces, Medieval Romans supposedly remained attached to form, constantly repeating what the luminaries of the past had crafted, unable to innovate and, above all, failing to critically engage with the material they read. One could argue that this assessment speaks more to modern anxieties about our own relationship with the classics than about the Byzantines' actual engagement with the Greco-Roman past.

Attaleiates' *History* is a work focused on political and military affairs of the period from the mid-1030s to 1079. Its purpose is outlined in the opening pages of what is a 300-page long narrative. Here the reader learns that history

describes illustrious deeds born of flawless planning and effort as well as inglorious actions caused by the faulty planning or negligence of those governing public affairs. Above all, it tells us about those who hold the highest office, how some of them successfully overcame clear and present dangers through their diligent military strategies, while others, even when victory was about to smile upon them, ruined everyone's hopes for a happy outcome by not making prudent use of the opportunities given to them. All these things are stripped bare by history and, as we said, there is much utility in them, for they convey clear instruction and set patterns for the future. They simply lead us to imitate what was discerned well and to avoid ill-advised and shameful deeds in wars, battles, and in all other most necessary offensive ventures and challenges of defense.⁷

The familiar idea that lessons can and must be drawn from the study of the past by a historically conscious individual has deep roots in ancient Greek thought. By writing history to instruct future generations how to avoid the failings of his contemporaries, Attaleiates joins a venerable

intellectual tradition well known to his peers. A few lines later, Attaleiates notes that he wrote about events he had personally experienced, refraining, to the degree that this was possible, from hearsay and from information he could not directly verify.⁸ A link is established here between the Byzantine author and men like Thucydides and Polybios who had written history after distinguished careers in the public eye. There is, however, a difference. Thucydides wrote in exile, having bungled an Athenian military operation, and Polybios compiled his magisterial history of the rise of Rome from comfortable captivity among the Romans in Italy. They wrote about events and actions they had witnessed or knew of from reliable contemporary sources and yet they were themselves no longer politically relevant. Attaleiates wrote instead at home in the empire's capital, very much an active political man. He addressed an audience of contemporaries, whom his work drew into a world of politics and action that they collectively inhabited and in no small degree affected.

We know for example, that when he records the campaigns of Romanos IV Diogenes in the *History*, he does so having been present at the camp and even having taken part in consultations with the army high command on issues of strategy. On occasion, he even inserts himself in the proceedings and gives us his opinion in the form of an address to the emperor. The reader can trust Attaleiates to be relating events in a reasonably accurate fashion. His audience after all consisted, at least to some degree, of men who had been present in those same meetings; men who would have immediately contested his version of events had it been less than honest. In many ways, his account resembles the memoirs of high-ranking government officials who translate privileged access to meetings and debates that define contemporary politics into life-like, albeit rarely unbiased, accounts of recent history.

The modern reader can study the *History* because soon after Attaleiates' death, the text was copied and circulated among circles of officials in the capital. No one really knows what the process of dissemination was like, though it is certain that a sumptuous copy survived for a while in the imperial library where Attaleiates' gift to Nikephoros III was surely deposited. This would have been a copy in parchment of the highest quality, as only the best of books were offered to the emperor. Attaleiates' investment in this copy would have been significant. A century earlier, bishop Arethas of Caesarea had spent up to twenty or more gold coins for copies of Plato and for Euclid's works. We can only

assume that to prepare a sumptuous volume in large format, Attaleiates would have spent a similar if not larger amount, adjusted for inflation given the debasement of the empire's currency in the second part of the eleventh century. He could by no stretch of the imagination think of a time when readers would sit at home with a copy of his work in hand that costs at most the equivalent of ten day's supply of bread.

Beyond this one sumptuous copy, there was also one paper manuscript surviving in the library of his monastery, donated by Attaleiates' secretary after the judge's death. The use of paper rather than parchment speaks of the notarial circles which Ioannes, the owner of the volume frequented. It also suggests possible ways of dissemination for the *History*. Paper was cheaper and may have indicated a parallel readership among secretaries, paralegals, and court officials that existed side by side with the reading salons of the civilian and military aristocracy whose threshold Attaleiates had surely attempted to cross. Besides this recorded but lost copy, we know of another, missing volume of the *History*. It appears on a list of manuscripts attached to a well-known Vatican codex containing Heliodoros' *Ethiopiká*.⁹ This elusive edition of the *History* offers fascinating information about Attaleiates' readers. Men and women with interest in the late antique escapist literature of Heliodoros were people with a respectable classical education. They were well read, refined in taste, and appreciative of literary worlds far removed from Christian day-to-day reality. Heliodoros was read in eleventh-century Constantinople and Michael Psellos even penned a work of literary analysis in which he compared him to the other great writer of the Roman East, Achileas Tatios, noting that "many well-educated persons were in dispute concerning these two romantic novels, which deal respectively with Chariclea and Leucippe, maidens fair in appearance and outstanding in character."¹⁰

Readers of Heliodoros' work were not, however, mere escapists with a taste for exotic travel and literary love affairs. They were themselves inventors of new types of romantic adventures. Niketas Eugenianos' *Drosilla and Charikles*, Theodore Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, Eustathios Makremvolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*, and Konstantinos Manasses' *Aristandros and Kallithea*, became popular during the reigns of the Komnenoi Emperors in the twelfth century. Attaleiates likely sought such men as readers for his own work.

Finally, leaving the literary salons for the less comfortable and more modestly furnished Byzantine scriptoria, we turn to two copies of the *History*, made out of parchment, that were produced in a period of

roughly fifty years following Attaleiates' death. The two, one missing the last hundred pages and the other one complete, survive in the manuscript collections of the Escorial in Spain and the National Library in Paris. The Escorial volume reveals a lot about its writer. Paleographers, the bookworm equivalent of forensic scientists, have decoded the DNA of its scribe's handwriting, noting that it presented all the characteristics of a cursive style also encountered in a volume with works of Saint Basileios and attributed to the Monk Basileios Anzas. This Basileios is not the only Anzas known to us. There was also a judge of the *velum* named Niketas who bore the same surname. Here, however, things get interesting, as this individual was a member of the narrow circle of judges frequented by Attaleiates, who in fact also served in the court of the *velum*. Niketas is in turn known for a fiscal register, surely not the most exciting reading, the handwriting on which is quite similar to that found on Attaleiates' manuscript preserved in Madrid. It is even more fascinating that a third Anzas, quite likely a relative of the other two, was a high-ranking judge in the 1050s and 1060s, who had been the executor of Attaleiates' wife's will.¹¹ It may then be that at least one known family from the world of justice actively engaged in Attaleiates' affairs.

The copy of the *History* preserved in Paris, clearly dated in the twelfth century, is, perhaps fittingly, the most elegant and sumptuous of the two. It was generated in an environment of affluent patrons, who could afford the work of four equally competent scribes. These men were all sticklers for orthography, who had mastered a fashionable small, upright, exuberant writing-style also evident in contemporary copies of famous historical works like Psellos' *Chronographia* and Glykas' *Annals*.¹² If scholars today tend to trust the mostly sober narrative of the *History*, the same appears to have been true of Attaleiates' contemporaries who copied his work and even adopted its storyline, reproducing it with but few emendations. Already in the late eleventh century, another judge, Ioannes Skylitzes complemented his own history originally ending with the reign of Isaakios Komnenos, with Attaleiates' accounts of what came after. Skylitzes reproduced whole parts of Attaleiates' work verbatim, like a newsman trustily relating an *AP* wire.

Attaleiates' contemporaries may have respected him as a historian, yet the *History* was not his only work. In fact, when the Emperor Michael VII Doukas referred to Attaleiates as an erudite in a *chrysoboullon* he offered to him in 1075, he was certainly not thinking of the judge as a historian. In those years, Attaleiates' reputation was built on his legal

expertise and on his understanding of the history of law. Attaleiates' long service in both civilian and military courts is substantiated by the professional titles recorded on both the *History* and the *Diataxis*, the autobiographic cameo appearances in the *History*, and the inscriptions on his surviving signet ring and led seal. His more scholarly engagement with law is on display in the *Ponema Nomikon*, a text he dedicated to Michael VII in 1072. This legal synopsis opens with a short introduction to the history of Roman law, from its inception during the Roman Republic to the publication of the *Basilika* in the tenth century. It then offers a summary of that later legal corpus. Jurists in the ensuing centuries read the *Ponema Nomikon* and had it copied in at least twenty-four manuscripts that survive today. In the fourteenth century, the noted jurist Konstantinos Armenopoulos used Attaleiates' work as one of his sources for the compilation of his own legal handbook, the *Hexabiblos*. Attaleiates therefore gained a place among the empire's legal legends that rivals his significance as a historian, a fact often sidestepped by scholars.

The most surprising relic from Attaleiates' life is a tiny object in the collections of the Dumbarton Oaks Centre in Washington, D.C. The judge wore on a daily basis a small ring, made of gold with enamel decoration of the mother of God on it, an image that also appeared on the lead seals he had made for office and personal use. On both ring and seal, we find embossed Attaleiates' calls for assistance to the Mother of God (Fig. 3.2).¹³

As patron Saint of the city of Constantinople, the Virgin Mary was a favorite of courtiers and members of the empire's civilian aristocracy. It is among the members of this class and in their writings, that the rest of the information regarding Attaleiates' experience will be sought. Aspects of their life story fit well with his own and we can be certain that men like Psellos, Mytilinaios, Symeon Seth, Basileios Maleses and others, shared acquaintances, intellectual and political interests, and most significantly, operated under the same palace roof. By talking about Attaleiates, we are in a sense narrating their experience as well, and by examining their work and actions, we look back to Attaleiates, whose life was often directly affected by them. The histories, letters, official memoranda, the saints' lives, monastic charters, and scores of other surviving documents of the eleventh century compiled by officials like Attaleiates provide the context for the analysis of his own texts and life. Much as the life of Virginia



Fig. 3.2 Attaleiates' ring from the Dumbarton Oaks collections

Wolf is better understood when we read about John Meynard Keynes, E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, and other members of the Bloomsbury group, Attaleiates' life becomes richer even as we read about the family affairs of Michael Psellos and the social circles of bishop Ioannes Mauropous of Euchaita.

Finally, the least obvious relic of Attaleiates' past is the largest and most accessible to a general audience. A trip to Istanbul, a good detailed map of the city, and a willing taxi driver can take one to a small, little-visited church in the southwestern part of the old town. Tucked away from the people's gaze, is a lonely inglorious building in the sea of humanity that is the modern city. This is the Church of Ai Giorgi Kiparissa, Saint George of the Cypresses. Here Attaleiates had his two deceased wives buried and planned to be himself interred. The church no longer bears a likeness to its medieval self, having been extensively remodeled in the empire's late years and then restored after a devastating



Fig. 3.3 St. George of the Cypresses

fire in the nineteenth century. Yet it is by this little church, and in the area next to it that Attaleiates' family established their final resting place. Somewhere in this little-visited corner of modern Istanbul, their bones may still lie under the accretions of centuries (Fig. 3.3).

Ai Giorgi Kiparissa reminds us that next to the books, the slowly fading ink on the manuscripts, and all the modern works on the literature and history of the eleventh century, that conspire to outline for the reader aspects of Attaleiates' life, the story before us unfolded in the very real and to some extent unchanged natural environment of the eastern Mediterranean and the Anatolian Plateau. It is on the timeless spaces of the Eurasian landmass that the eleventh-century drama was played out. The mountains, the sea, the olive tree, and the catch of the Mediterranean, next to the ruins of a living antiquity and the medieval creations of a people who called themselves Romans provided the setting for Attaleiates' life. Parchment was, after all, made of sheepskin from flocks grazing on the Anatolian plateau.

NOTES

1. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 354 on those blank pages.
2. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 111–12, Bekker 61 on confiscations.
3. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 354.
4. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 341 on commemorating the family.
5. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, pp. 338–39.
6. Inmaculada Pérez Martín, *Miguel Atalíates: Historia* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2002), pp. l–li.
7. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 9, Bekker 7–8.
8. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 11, Bekker 8.
9. Inmaculada Pérez Martín, *Miguel Atalíates: Historia* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2002), p. lvii.
10. Andrew R. Dyck (ed. and trans.), *Michael Psellus: The Essays on Euripides and George of Pisidia and on Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1986), p. 91 for the translation.
11. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 333.
12. Inmaculada Pérez Martín, *Miguel Atalíates: Historia* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2002), pp. lx–lxi.
13. Gustave L. Schlumberger, *Sigillographie de l'Empire Byzantin* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1884), p. 438: *Μιχαὴλ ἀνθόπατος ο Ἀτταλειάτης* with an image of the Virgin holding a baby Jesus on the obverse.



CHAPTER 4

Attaleia: The Busy, Bustling Fringe

“He who gives birth to a son will be immortal.”¹ This was a feeling shared by many Romans and it certainly filled the hearts and minds of one urban family from Attaleia sometime around the year 1025. The household in which the man later to be known as Michael Attaleiates was born had every reason to feel that it was blessed by God, as the arrival of a baby boy ensured that the family line would likely be continued. Celebrations followed the event, the neighborhood and relatives becoming involved in the family’s joy.² In the days and months before the baby’s birth, the family would have sought hints as to the sex of the child. Wet nurses tested the quality of the mother’s milk seeking the thick sticky substance they associated with boys. The mother’s stomach was checked and a pretty round belly with a certain stiffness was seen as more evidence of a coming son.³ Quince from the mountain plateaus in the Taurus range rising tall behind Attaleia was no doubt consumed to ensure the child’s intelligence.⁴ The family may even have consulted astrologers in their desire for “scientific” prognostication. After the baby was born they would draw an accurate astrological chart and open discussions about their son’s future. Around 1025 one could expect the best for a boy born a citizen of a triumphant empire. The astrologers had every reason to be optimistic in their assessments.

The baby was baptized in a local church forty days after his birth. We know nothing about the thinking behind the family’s choice of Michael as a name for their son. The father’s name Eirenikos (Pacific, Serene) was not passed on to Attaleiates’ own son, who was instead given the

name Theodore, a divine gift indeed to a man who had already lost one wife and at the time lived in a less than serene empire. In any case, the church fully condoned this break from the pagan tradition of naming children after their grandfather. Michael was after all a good Christian name, which could easily have been chosen for its religious significance. After these early moments of familial bliss and celebration, the project of raising the young boy to promising manhood lay before them. Early on Michael would have been consigned to his parent's bedroom; soon however, he was taken out into the yard and maybe even the street before the family house, where he was introduced to the neighbors. Eventually, once old enough, he was let loose, not without some supervision, in the streets of his hometown, Attaleia.

In one of the most interesting rhetorical texts of the eleventh century, the encomium to his mother, Michael Psellos, a contemporary of Attaleiates', reminisces about his childhood. The philosopher takes us to the warmest most innocent moments of his childhood and extols his mother's piety by noting how as a child he was never treated to bedtime stories drawn from the pagan myths. It was the world of scriptural edification that his mother brought to life in her efforts to put the young prodigy to sleep. A few years younger than Psellos, Attaleiates was similarly proud of his parents' piety.⁵ He tells us little, however, about them and nothing he records comes close to Psellos' intricate psychological portraits. Yet, the world in which Attaleiates was born had its fair share of folk tales and blood-curdling stories. As Michael grew older, he was bound to have heard from his friends, for this was not the stuff of lullabies, the story of the "bane of Attaleia."

Known to us from its western European variants, the most famous of which comes from the "Travels of Sir John Mandeville," the story was in effect a dark thriller. It was set in the distant pagan past of Attaleia and brought together the mythical Gorgon and errant knights in an adventure of bloody twists and turns. The story, as Attaleiates perhaps knew it, was simple in its gothic horror. A noble young warrior, who fails to get the hand of his beloved lady, visits her tomb upon her death and performs an act of desperate love and sacrilege. He opens the sarcophagus, lies with her and at the end of his deed hears the dead lady as she addresses him with the simple request that he come by the tomb in nine months to see the spawn of their love. The young man returns indeed after the end of the *unn*naturally allotted time, opens the sarcophagus and finds a head most horrible to behold. His deceased lover explains to him

that this head is their child and that it would allow him to exact horrible vengeance from his enemies. Whoever sees it will simply experience the most painful of deaths. The young man “adopts” the head, which he keeps in a locked box until one day a favorite from among his servants, or alternatively his wife or new lover, curious to unlock the great mystery of his life opens it and shows it to the man himself who dies on the spot having fatefully gazed at the eyes of his monstrous love child. Eventually, as the stories have it, the head is tossed into the waters of the gulf of Attaleia where its terrible powers account for the many horrible wonders of the area.⁶

Such a story would certainly have resonated with Attaleiates and his contemporaries. In the vicinity of Attaleia, one could find clear evidence of worlds turned upside down, of cities unhinged from the solid ground on which they had once stood proud, and tossed into the water. Waterspouts jumped out of the calm waters, close to the beach, where the sweet outflow of Lycia’s coastal springs and rivers merged with salty Mediterranean water, vortices threatened swimmers, while submerged Greek and Roman cities made navigating the coast on the approaches to Attaleia a challenging task.⁷ The sunken cities of the gulf of Attaleia were the stuff of legend but also an interesting reminder of the past’s presence. The young Attaleiates would have known of staircases descending into the water and sarcophagi barely protruding from the surf of the sea. The dead cities that lay submerged, just beneath the sea level, belonged in the material world he lived in, not too far beyond his visual and mental horizon. Attaleia was a microcosm of the empire: ancient and brimming with traditions all too often pagan, drawn from its living past. Let us then move from the land of gothic horror, necrophilia, and treacherous sailing to the city itself in which Attaleiates was born and spent his childhood.

Michael Attaleiates’ hometown is located in the southern coast of Asia Minor to the northwest of the island of Cyprus. It was founded in 150 BC by King Attalos II of Pergamon and soon after became the object of interest for Rome’s ambitious leaders. Attaleia’s cultural and political links to the kingdom of Pergamon encode important information regarding the city’s significance on the Eastern Mediterranean seaboard. While a look at the map confirms the importance of the city as a maritime trading post on busy sea-routes, it was its connections to the interior that made Attaleia truly important.⁸ When Attalos invested his kingdom’s treasure in a new city that would establish his presence on the

Mediterranean it was Attaleia's links to the interior that led him to that location. The city is built on a fertile, if indeed narrow plain, more or less bounded by the western extensions of the Taurus and Pisidian mountains to the North. The plain itself is the offspring of two rivers, the Kestros and the Eurymedon. Already from the time of the Romans three routes existed that took heavy wheeled traffic from the seacoast to the interior of Asia Minor, toward Karia, Lykaonia, and Kappadokia. Attaleia was the only coastal city in Asia Minor east of the Kilikian centers of Tarsos, Adana, and ancient Antioch in Kilikia, with access to North-South routes leading to important economic and political centers of Asia Minor. This peculiar geographical setting impacted Attaleiates, who grew close to the water and the open horizons it afforded, but also developed a keen interest for things Anatolian. It appears as if the landmass to the North of Attaleia exerted a permanent appeal to the expat Attaleiote, who in years to come was to write with passion about the need to defend it from his new home in Constantinople.

In Constantinople, it was cured fish and, sometimes, the enjoyment of fresh grilled catch from the waters of the Bosphorus and the Marmara that sated the appetite of the hungry man looking for a snack. This experience is replicated today when a tourist walks the shores of the Golden Horn in modern Istanbul. One may order silver-blue spotted mackerel, grilled over charcoal, and served on a parsley bed with lemon wedges and onion shavings or maybe a slice of turbot, floured and deep-fried, or a *levrek* (filet of seabass). We can be sure that Attaleiates' Constantinopolitans shared this experience.⁹ The sea influenced their tastes and defined the basic parameters in which the capital's food supply operated. Attaleiates finished his life in the capital, fed for years, one may safely assume, on a steady diet of Bosphorus catch. What was it, however, that the local population enjoyed as a snack in the streets, the public squares or even the harbor of Attaleia, where the judge was born and raised? What were Michael's childhood meals like? We get a possible answer to this question by looking toward Attaleia's much older neighbor, the city of Phaselis, known in antiquity for its dedication to trade and its annual sacrifice of cured fish to the gods.¹⁰ The local economy evidently placed a premium on the products of the sea, the only element of the local diet considered valuable enough to be offered to the gods. In the Middle Ages, the relationship between Phaselis and Attaleia was a tight one. The building-boom generated by the growth of the latter in the tenth and eleventh centuries spurred "scavenging" operations in the

region of the former. Phaselis' buildings were pillaged for the fortifications of Attaleia to be erected. Attaleia's walls embedded *spolia* of a classical past, much as in Attaleiates' texts the literary detritus of antiquity structures, informs, and inflects his argument.¹¹

If Phaselis gives us one, albeit limited hint about the diet and the economy of Attaleia, a latter-day traveler, the Ottoman writer Evliya Celebi, noted in his seventeenth-century account that the city was famous for its oranges, dates, olives, and figs.¹² At an earlier time, an Arab traveler visiting Romanía, Ibn Hauqal, noted that Attaleia was a strong fort with a productive hinterland. The alluvial plain of the Eurymedon and Kestros rivers enriched its soil keeping the city's hinterland fertile. And yet, the two rivers were Janus-like. Celebi explained that the Eyrmedon (Duden in Turkish) was rather calciferous and that the pipes used to channel its waters into Attaleia had to be cleared on a yearly basis so as not to stem the water supply. As for the Kestros, Celebi described it as a powerful but good-for-nothing river. Fed by snow melting on the Taurus, the Kestros has a strong current, yet its rich alluvial deposit proved a mixed blessing for the area. Today the river is some hundred meters wide where it meets the sea, yet narrow and shallow in other parts of its delta. Even though in antiquity it used to be navigable for some eleven kilometers upstream toward the direction of Perge, this was no longer the case in the Middle Ages. The alluvium from the river made its delta shallow enough to render it unusable by vessels that draw more than one foot of water, thus striking a blow to the economy of Perge. As if that was not enough, the languid waters of the delta created a mosquito-infested lagoon-like area, which gave, so Celebi claims, the local population the yellow skin tinge of malaria.¹³

During the summer months then, Attaleiotes sought refuge from the heat in the neighboring mountain slopes, where one could hope to avoid the malarial humidity of the hot plain. The climb up toward the mountain areas would have brought Attaleiates and his family in a land of ancient ruins, with all the myths and demons associated with them. The plain of Attaleia and its environs were rich in history. Termessos and Phaselis in the west and Perge, Sylaiion, Aspendos, and Side in the east were all ancient cities, which were still alive, even if in the form of smaller agglomerations of houses, built on top of and among the ruins of antiquity. Attaleiates' excursions in the area would have exposed him to a lively, continuing dialogue between past and present at roughly the same age when his first contact with Homer's heroic *ethos* came to

challenge familiar scriptural injunctions. On occasion, the past was so majestic that it overwhelmed the present and perhaps shaped Attaleiates' later writing. A visit in the area of Aspendos, forty kilometers to the east of Attaleia brought one before what is today the best-preserved theater of the Roman world. Colonnaded streets, remains of late Roman, and early Byzantine buildings and ruins of a past long-gone remained deeply engrained in Attaleiates' mind and certainly marked his sense of self.

When years later in 1064 an earthquake struck the Hellespont Attaleiates wrote extensively about its effects on the local cities focusing on damage to his own property. He, however, could not ignore the devastation of venerable ancient monuments and noted

In the Hellespont, Kyzikos was especially struck, where the ancient Greek temple was also shaken and most of it collapsed. This had been quite a sight to behold on account of the solidity of its construction, the technical harmony by which it was built out of beautiful and great blocks, as well as on account of its height and size.¹⁴

In the vicinity of Attaleia, the fortifications of the city were reinforced and expanded in the tenth century during the reign of Leon VI and the early days of Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos' rule. The inscription set up on those walls by Leon was a lesson in Roman political ideology. The emperor noted here

Always displaying fatherly care, /treating all subjects as his children /the most serene and pious emperor/ Leo, with his sweetest son Konstantinos/ always acting with compassion/ cared for the salvation of everyone/ and saving the said Christ loving city/ wisely fortified it with a second wall.¹⁵

The inscription highlighted the links between the provinces and Constantinople, and spoke of the emperor's duty to even his most distant subjects. Attaleia may have indeed been far from the capital, yet the emperor evidently kept his eyes on it.

Another inscription, dated to the early tenth century, commemorated the completion of an extensive wall renovation program and proclaimed Attaleia "of all cities the best fortified, pride of the Romans and rampart against the infidel Hagarenes." The regency council for Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos, presided by his mother Zoe reinforced at the time

the older Roman wall in response to increased Arab naval activity in the area. Ironically, Leon of Tripoli, the Muslim admiral who led the spectacular expedition that captured and looted Thessalonike in 904, was behind much of the raiding in question. Leon drew his origins from Attaleia. A third inscription gives us the name of the head of the fleet, the *Droungarios* Stephanos Abastaktos (the insufferable), who evidently also contributed to the defenses of the city.¹⁶ The walls of Attaleia on which we find those inscriptions extended from the area of the harbor, which the latter-day visitor Evliya Celebi notes was an artificial one, all the way to the 30-meter cliff atop which the acropolis was built.¹⁷ In Attaleiates' time, the locals would still enter the city through the gate of Hadrian, erected in honor of the Roman Emperor's second-century visit (Fig. 4.1).

The inscriptions discussed here highlight an important aspect of Attaleia's character and identity: This was a frontier city. Even if the mountains to its north and the rough Kilikian coast ensured that land



Fig. 4.1 Hadrian's Gate in Attaleia—Antalya, Turkey

invasions could not easily reach it, its location on the Pamphylian littoral placed it at the forefront of the empire's naval defenses. In fact, Attaleia was a forward base of the imperial navy and center of the Kibyrraiotai Theme, the empire's most important naval force, if one excluded the imperial fleet in Constantinople. There were two divisions of the fleet (*droungai*); one located in Attaleia, under the so-called admiral of the Gulf (*Droungarios toy Kolpon*), and one on the Island of Kos. Next to them, there were two leaders of the ground forces located in other cities of the Theme. Eight days from the capital on the fast imperial post horses that traveled across Anatolia, and fifteen days on the more circuitous sea-lanes, Attaleia was both near and far from empire's nerve center.

This liminal position exposed the city to diverse cultural influences that transcended the narrow realities of the Pamphylian coast. An important cipher in the mosaic that was Attaleia's population was added in the late seventh century. In the 690s, an agreement between the Caliph and Emperor Justinian II allowed for the relocation of 12,000 Mardaites into the territories of the empire. The Mardaites remain a mysterious ethnic group of tribesmen originally settled in highland areas of Anatolia, Isauria, Syria and on Mount Lebanon.¹⁸ Over the years, scholars attributed to them Armenian origins and saw them as Zoroastrian converts to Christianity, while others associated them with today's Maronites. The most recent scholarly efforts remain decidedly non-committal. We know with greater certainty that a significant portion of those men and their families were relocated in the late seventh century from their original areas of settlement in the lands of the Caliphate to Attaleia where they were immediately dragooned into the Roman Navy. Placed under their own commanders, they manned numerous ships, led by the *Katepano* of the Mardaites.¹⁹ The presence of a distinct ethnic and linguistic group with a clearly defined corporate identity among the Romans of Attaleia raises a question about the speed of their integration in the Greek-speaking body of the city's inhabitants. Did the frontier nature of the town pressure the newcomers into fast assimilation or did elements of their identity survive to Attaleiates' days? It seems that in the tenth century when reference to extensive Roman naval activity can be found in both Byzantine and Arab sources, the Mardaites still operated as an independent unit with their own leaders. There is, however, evidence that the structure keeping the *thematic* navy and the units of the Mardaites independent from each other occasionally led to antagonism. This forced authorities in Constantinople to take measures that would ensure the

seamless operation of local military assets.²⁰ One solution to this problem is found in contemporary evidence. A certain Niketas, who had already served as supreme commander of the Kibyrraiotai, petitioned the emperor with the request that his son Abekrios be appointed *Katepano* of the Mardaites.²¹ On the one hand, the Near Eastern name of Niketas' son suggests that he may have issued from a Mardaite family. On the other, control of the city's two highest naval commands by one family offers evidence that Attaleia had seen the emergence of a military aristocracy with a hold on important imperial commands.

Furthermore, the effective lobbying of the emperor on the part of Niketas confirms the presence in Constantinople, already in the tenth century, of a group of influential Attaleiotes lobbying at court in favor of their fellow countrymen.²² While emperors were careful to rotate their high-ranking imperial personnel in order to avoid the development of too strong a link between commander and provincial population, in the case of the three naval themes, which required special skills from their military commanders, this proved difficult. It is therefore hardly surprising that local families with long careers in the navy came to dominate the military establishment in Attaleia developing over the years connections to the court in Constantinople. Those connections surely proved useful when the young Attaleiates moved into the daunting social landscape of the capital in search of a career.

On the empire's maritime frontier with the prosperous and frequently aggressive Muslim world, Attaleia was a storied navy town but also an important entrepôt. Its harbor was full of vessels sailing in from the east with glass products from Egypt, silk, and linen from Syria and other distant lands in Asia, as well as spices from the Indies. Already in the tenth century, a period otherwise marked by active warfare between Romanía and its neighbors, the city collected 300 pounds of gold in tolls from merchants who sailed in its harbor. Another 30,000 *dinars* (roughly the same amount in Byzantine gold coins) accrued from financial transactions.²³ By the eleventh century, as Roman expansion in Syria diminished the town's military role, its commercial significance rose. On the sea-lanes from the Latin west to Palestine and Egypt, Attaleia became a port of call for Italian merchants seeking exotic goods for the Kings and upper classes of the west. If Ioannes Tzetzes presented twelfth-century Constantinople as a linguistic Babel, Attaleiates experienced similar conditions by the Mediterranean before he ever set out for the capital. Christians from Egypt felt at home in the town's churches

where the cult of the Virgin *Aigyptia* (the Egyptian) was celebrated.²⁴ Armenian merchants came to his hometown looking for stout slaves, Rabanite, and Karaite Jews visited in the course of their journeys around the Mediterranean, while Muslims from the Near East and North Africa traded with Italians and other Europeans in the city's streets and markets.²⁵

And yet, even in the heady years of the first half of the eleventh century, when no force on the diplomatic and military horizon appeared to challenge the empire, the affluence and vibrant nature of the city's commercial activities could be interrupted by news of an approaching war fleet and by the depredations of pirates. Basileios II's full-spectrum military dominance had not turned the Eastern Mediterranean into a Roman lake. In fact, three years after Basileios's death, in 1028, news arrived at the Jewish community of Cairo of the abduction in Roman waters, just outside Attaleia, of a number of Jewish merchants. Two ships traveling apparently in convoy had been stopped by pirates.²⁶ Attaleiates would have experienced many an alarm, crews rushing to the ships and the oars of the galleys quickly put in motion even as the families of the sailors huddled to the piers to see the fleet head out to the uncertainty of pursuit and battle.

One such mobilization took place shortly before Attaleiates left for Constantinople. In the summer of 1035, news reached the admiralty in Attaleia of a large Arab fleet from Sicily active in Roman waters. The town's entire flotilla was mobilized and set out with all the fanfare and ceremony associated with such events. Vigils were no doubt held in churches around town, the clergy blessed the ships' insignia and flags, and the city was in motion as almost everyone in it had a family member serving in the navy. Before the thematic fleet ever engaged the enemy, the Arabs had managed to land in the vicinity of the city of Myra, birthplace of St. Nicolas and home to his vibrant cult, inflicting on it severe damage. News of this disaster will have reached Attaleia overland before the eventual return of the fleet, thus heightening feelings of uncertainty among the Attaleiates. When the fleet entered the city's harbor weeks later after a long-naval pursuit and a crushing victory over the enemy they no doubt caused a sensation.²⁷ The last significant Arab naval expedition in the Aegean was destroyed in a great battle at the Cyclades hundreds of miles away from the fleet's base. Stories of Roman seamanship and bravery surely passed from mouth to mouth, while everyone noted the deserved punishment meted on the Saracens: 500 were sent in

chains to the emperor in Constantinople, the rest were either drowned at sea or impaled along Asia's Aegean coast. To the teenage Attaleiates the *droungarios* of the fleet, his officers, their marines and the sailors would no doubt have been heroes.

Such experiences surely influenced Attaleiates' later-day perspective on Roman politics. A man born in a city accustomed to victory and prosperity ended his life in the capital of a rapidly collapsing world. Memories of Roman heroes coming home from the frontlines of the war against the enemy to a cheering welcoming crowd would have reminded Attaleiates of the possibility of Roman victory at a time when it was truly difficult to find much to be optimistic about. In the mid-thirties, however, the prospect of the empire's demise could not have been envisaged. Attaleia was a boomtown and it is likely that his family shared in the prosperity generated by empire's successes of the past century. Yet life in Attaleia was also bound to skew Attaleiates' perspective on Romanía's society as a whole. The empire was a predominantly agricultural space, where millions of farmers produced wealth that officials from distant Constantinople collected in order to keep the state running and the polity defended. As we saw, in Attaleia the situation was quite different. Here one was exposed to different nations on a daily basis and learned to treat foreigners as part of life. Attaleiates' hometown was not some isolated backwater with little exposure to the world. It was home to an economy rather different from that shaping the lives of most Roman citizens. People here made a living through trips to distant lands and the exchange of goods. Attaleia's economy was highly monetized and open to the outside world. Above all, Attaleia's society was built around the navy and the sailors. In some ways, this navy town on the shores of the Mediterranean had more in common with ancient city-states, like Athens, Corinth, Corcyra, and Rhodes, than with cities in the empire's hinterland. Just the oarsmen on its warships, many of whom doubled as marines when battle was struck mid-sea, would have brought its population to 5000 men. With merchant marine personnel, marines serving on the fleet's ships, farmers from the lands around it, tradesmen, and other service industries staff, as well as women, children and the elderly, Attaleia most certainly enjoyed a relatively stable population of anywhere between 15 and 25,000 people, making it one of Romanía's larger urban centers.

Attaleiates gives us a hint of the intimate mesh between the navy and the general population of the city in a peculiar story he narrates for his readers in the *History*. In an account of heroic deeds attributed to

the legendary warrior-emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, Attaleiates discusses the tenth-century campaign for the re-conquest of the island of Crete from the Saracens. The story reads at times like a personal account of a bragging sailor. The emperor, we are told, led the fleet from Asia Minor toward Crete, but was lost on the way on account of the lack of navigation intelligence regarding travel toward this part of the Mediterranean. Like stories of sea monsters and devastating tempests, Phokas' exploits mirrored the *Odyssey*, the Saracens likened to the Cyclops and Lestrigones of the Homeric epic. Once the fleet reached the island Nikephoros ordered a church to be built in order to propitiate the divine. Attaleiates then notes that given the large amount of artisans, builders, painters, and, in general, men with the requisite skills who served in the imperial host, the church was built in three days, stunning the Saracens and pleasing God. This story, no doubt based on one or more of the numerous accounts of the island's re-conquest in circulation, suggests that the empire's naval forces were not comprised of full-time mariners, but rather of citizens from diverse professional backgrounds. In Attaleia of Michael's youth, the idea of a citizen soldier or sailor was quite real.²⁸

A certain look on Attaleia that would treat it as part of the empire but also as a city-state, quasi-independent in its operation and able to fend for itself, was also reinforced by the nature of its admiral's power. The *droungarios* of the fleet was not simply a commander of the navy. He was not merely a leader of men. His post, more so than that of other military officers of his time, was more like CEO of a diverse conglomerate of industries and trades that came together to keep the fleet afloat. While the *droungarios* did lead the fleet in battle, his role was mostly non-military. He was responsible for building new ships, deciding what types of vessels were necessary for different military operations and then for the upkeep and maintenance of those galleys already in operation.²⁹ At his orders, the citizens of Attaleia would take excursions to the rivers by their city to pick nicely rounded pebbles for use as projectiles during sea battle. Others roamed the countryside in search of snakes, scorpions, vipers, and lizards to throw at the enemy during battle.³⁰ At his command, carpenters and lumberjacks from among his crews took trips to Kilikia and Cyprus, as well as the mountains above Attaleia, to cut down the trees necessary for shipbuilding.³¹ His word put in motion machinery that converted the natural surroundings of the Attaleiotes into resources for the empire's navies.

There was therefore something quite different in the way that Attaleia operated in comparison with the average urban center in the empire. While in the middle of Anatolia a town that functioned as a center for the military administration was often but a glorified fort, the base for a small number of soldiers and the muster station for those troops of the theme that converged on it at a commander's order from the villages, towns, and rural areas of the province, in Attaleia, the city was the navy. Rare among the empire's cities Attaleia was a place where the might of the empire was everywhere before you. Here the lives of each citizen were tightly linked to those of the soldiers and oarsmen defending them. Like ancient Roman legionaries in the field of Mars, Attaleiotes came together at the order of the *droungarios*, to train, listen to his harangues and receive orders for their coming deployments.³² All this took place in the presence of relatives who took the navy for granted. Living in this city, Michael Attaleiates was exposed to ideas of governance and administration that raised expectations as to what Romanía's leaders were supposed to be capable of. He lived in what was effectively a medieval Roman city-state, whose citizens assumed an integral role in its defense.

The sea could be treacherous as local folktales and stories would attest, but those same waters were a source of wealth and inspiration. The people of Attaleia were seafarers. At a later date, in the thirteenth century when the area became independent from its Seljuq rulers, the local emirates that sprung out of this chaotic post-Byzantine situation could field as many as 300 small-size warcraft. Such activity was by no means new in the area. In the time of the Roman Republic, the southern shores of Asia Minor had given the Mediterranean world its most famous pirate kingdoms. At the time of Attaleiates' childhood, the city stood on the side of law and order. It was the center of a Roman maritime province, tasked, among other things, with anti-pirate operations. As a child, Michael would have had vivid memories of masts piercing the sky like lances of an army on parade. This same image emerges years later when, in describing the royal entry of Nikephoros Botaneiates in Constantinople, Attaleiates explained how the empire's merchant marine created a forest of masts as it sailed out in the Sea of Marmara to receive the new emperor.³³ In his youth, Attaleiates walked among foreign travelers, who visited his hometown. Their multicolored clothes no doubt intrigued him and he likely kept a keen ear for their strange dialects and languages. From the pier of Attaleia's harbor, he saw their boats drop anchor and then eventually open sail for distant lands. From a young

age, he knew that the world around him was much larger than what his senses allowed him to perceive. He would in fact have approved of Psellos' analysis of the earth's spherical nature, supported as it was by the nautical image of the ship's sail slowly appearing from behind the horizon only gradually to reveal the rest of the vessel from top to bottom.³⁴ We find hints of Attaleiates' childhood experience in the details of his adult life, to be followed in the coming chapters.

While Attaleia's military caste and merchant class are backdrops against which to read Attaleiates' social experience in his hometown, some of his early brushes with Roman society's social distinctions were to come in the form of language. Attending liturgy with his family in their neighborhood church, he would have been struck by the difference between the language of the gospels and that spoken by most people in his close social circle. Moving, as kids are wont to do, up and down the aisle of the church he would have noticed that the progression from the back rows frequented by the family's servants toward the middle, where his father and male relatives sat and finally the part occupied by the neighborhood's richer men at the very front, was coupled by a slow, almost imperceptible at first, linguistic shift. Why did some among the richer folk use peculiar twists of phrase? Why did they, every so often, speak of foreign affairs by referring to Persians when the poor at the back of the church talked of Saracens? Why did fancy clothing go hand in hand with odd language? The problem of language was alas not contained within church walls. When he walked around Attaleia's fortifications and looked at the various inscriptions that studded the city's walls with declarations of official patriotism he no doubt noticed that some of them were simply incomprehensible by the common man. A case in point the imperial dedications of Leon VI and his son, discussed above on the one hand, and the pretentious writing of Abastaktos' (insufferable in Greek) inscription on the other.³⁵ While the emperors wished to reach as many of their subjects as possible with their crisp and precise words, the *Droungarios*, an aristocrat, tried to impress his superior status upon the locals by deploying insufferably pretentious verbiage. Attaleiates' experience was not uniquely Byzantine. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reasonably well-off merchants and landowners on the north Aegean Island of Lesbos, a favorite Byzantine place of exile, spoke a more, or less mangled *katharevousa*—the archaizing, highly artificial version of modern Greek that was the state's official language until 1974—in a conscious effort to raise yet another barrier between

themselves and the peasant society living at subsistence level around them.³⁶ Language had been an essential marker of group identity either at the class or national level from the days of antiquity, and Michael was getting his early education on social hierarchies even as he learned how to speak.

Michael was also exposed to the paradox of this linguistic divide at home. He tells us that it was his parents who instructed him in the orthodox word of God. We may assume that his mother, much like the mother of his contemporary, Michael Psellos, read with him the Scriptures thus exposing him to the notion of social inequality through the simple act of reading. The sense that social status was directly linked to linguistic register would have been further reinforced as Attaleiates was next introduced to the most important of the classical authors, the cornerstone of a classical education, Homer. In class with his schoolmates, he would marvel at the alien nature of this ancient form of Greek and would have experienced the toil, uncertainty, and exhilaration that come with mastering its intricacies and subtleties. In fact, chances are that he only became proficient in Homeric Greek later in life, if ever. At this early stage, back in Attaleia, the language of Homer was as alien as the classical architectural remains he encountered in the course of his hikes around his hometown's countryside. In his frustration over the steep learning curve he was facing, he may even have felt that the peculiar Mardaite dialect of kids in his neighborhood was less cryptic than the angry speechifying of Homeric heroes. Such frustrations aside, it was likely his aptitude in the study of this venerable yet dusty form of Greek that lay at the root of his move to Constantinople and eventual career at court.

The thinking behind Eirenikos' decision to send his son to the empire's capital must remain shrouded in mystery. It would perhaps have been easier for Michael to take over the family business and stay in Attaleia. In his monastic charter, Attaleiates tells us that he arrived in Constantinople with no real fortune of his own, having left his patrimony to his two sisters.³⁷ He also notes that all he acquired in life was the fruit of his own hard work. Might it be that his father recognizing Michael's potential gave him the wherewithal to seek an education and career in Constantinople in order to guarantee a better fate for his daughters. To this day, the practice is not unheard of. A close friend chose studies in London over real estate in Athens, which his family bequeathed to his sister. Like Attaleiates his training provided him

with the means to make more than his less “productive” sister; herself a trained archaeologist. My friend’s choice of an elite education is evidence of a dynamic modern world, where movement across large geographical and cultural divides is possible. Yet Attaleiates’ career tells us that this was also true, to some extent, in Romanía. The provincial boy from the Mediterranean coast could, like a citizen of Modern Greece, seek the cloud-covered skies of the North in search of material prosperity and like him he was to enter a world of higher incomes and prestige through specialized education.

The fact itself that a prosperous future could be imagined by Michael and his father is indicative of important developments in Medieval Roman society. Given an ancient and medieval tendency toward economic autonomy and the habitual structuring of familial economic enterprises around notions of self-sufficiency and autarchy, the leap of faith required for investment in higher education was significant, unless there were clearly visible returns associated with such a choice. Another way to read Attaleiates’ relinquishing of his rights on the family property in favor of his sisters would be to focus on the cost of such specialized training. It is likely that his education represented a considerable monetary outlay for his family, conceivably equivalent to the value of land and property left behind in Attaleia. The family’s choice, however, suggests that such investment was not considered all that risky. To understand how that could in fact be the case, we need to look at the period itself when Attaleiates moved to Constantinople. This was a time when the empire was still expanding and the administration in the capital cast an eye on territories around its borders, which would still have to be integrated and managed by the Byzantine state. The Roman polity was therefore growing and finessing its administrative apparatus even as young Michael was coursing through adolescence.

The Macedonian dynasty, which had ruled the empire from the end of the ninth century to the death of Basileios II and was still a potent force in politics with Basileios’s nieces in the role of kingmakers, was known for its legislative efforts aimed at protecting the empire’s weaker subjects from the aristocracy. Over the course of the tenth century and especially under Basileios II, the law became more and more present in the lives of people as the Constantinopolitan state actively fought abuse. The effects of this policy on the ground can only be imagined. Generations of imperial subjects had been raised knowing that the emperor in Constantinople was the upholder of justice, the ally of the poor, and the avenger of the oppressed. The rhetorical preamble to a law by tenth-century Emperor Romanos Lekapenos advertised his commitment to

protecting his subjects from both enemy attacks by Romanía's foreign enemies but also from more insidious domestic foes. The "the cutting sword of legislation," was therefore deployed against the "greedy disposition," "tyrannical yoke," and oppressing hand of the Byzantine elite.³⁸

Lofty rhetoric, however, called for lofty actions. With the expansion of the empire, the Constantinopolitan bureaucratic apparatus also expanded, spreading an ideology of justice to communities and lands previously neglected, or even untouched by Roman law. More than ever before judges, tax collectors, and agents of the emperor roamed the provinces. They were conspicuous, dressed in flashy silk robes, competing in grandeur with the traditional doyens of provincial power, the members of the army officer corps, and other local landowners.³⁹ In Attaleia, more so than in other provincial cities there were quite a few imperial agents involved in the business of toll collection. As Asia Minor's second most important port of entry after Trapezous, Attaleia provided the state with significant revenues. The *kommerkiarioi* of Attaleia, attested in surviving lead seals, were part of the city's social fabric.⁴⁰ Provincials knew well that those imperial agents were not always Constantinopolitans. In fact very few people in Romanía were Constantinopolitans. Men and women moved to the capital from some other fatherland. For Attaleiates' father an intelligent, hardworking son could easily be imagined in such fancy robes. Eirenikos could, therefore, have admonished Michael with the very same words used by Theodore Prodromos' father in the twelfth century:

Child, see that man? He used to walk on foot,
 He now rides a fat mule with double leather straps;
 During his studies he went about shoeless,
 But now behold him in pointy shoes!
 As a student, he never combed his hair,
 now he prides in his hair-do.
 And he never cast an eye on the bathhouse gates;
 Now he bathes – thrice a week!
 Lice the size of almonds used to dwell in his clothes
 Now those garments are stuffed with emperor Manuel's coin.
 So learn your letters, trust your old father's word,
 and there'll be no one like you!⁴¹

The emperor's gold could indeed make you rich were you educated enough to effectively court it. The largest employer in the empire, the state itself, was hiring and it was up to those with talent to seek a place

in the new order. Attaleiates' father could only hope that his son would soon be able to speak a type of pretentious Greek that he, on his part, would likely not understand. The starker the cultural divide between generations, the greater the family's success.

NOTES

1. Isodoros of Pelousion, *PG* 78, 1160; Anthony Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2006), p. 173 where Psellos admits that girls were acceptable too.
2. Anthony Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2006), p. 172–75 for the joy brought to family and friends by a child's birth.
3. Franz V. Cumont and Franz Boll (ed.), *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* (Brussels: Henry Lemertin, 1904), p. 153.
4. Bernhard Langkavel (ed.), *Simeonis Sethi Syntagma de Alimentorum Facultatibus* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1868), p. 48, lines 19–21 on the association of quince and intelligence.
5. Anthony Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2006), p. 65 on pious lullabies; Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 333.
6. See bibliographical essays for details.
7. Howard Crane, "Evliya Çelebi's Journey through the Pamphylian Plain in 1671–72," *Muqarnas 10: Essays in Honor of Oleg Grabar* (1993), p. 160 for cyclones in Antalya's harbour; Mehmet Karaca, "Modeling of summertime meso- β scale cyclone in the Antalya Bay," *Geophysical Research Letters* 24.2 (1997), pp. 151–54.
8. *TIB* 8, vol. 1, pp. 244–82 on the local road system. Page 245 for a map/diagram of those roads.
9. Johannes Koder (ed.), *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen in CFHB* 33 (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1991), pp. 126–28 on Constantinopolitan fish markets.
10. *Deipnosophistai*, III. 52 on the Phaselis fish sacrifice.
11. J. Schäfer, *Phaselis: Beiträge zur Topographie und Geschichte der Stadt und ihrer Häfen* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1981), p. 37.
12. Evliya Celebi in Howard Crane, "Evliya Çelebi's Journey through the Pamphylian Plain in 1671–72," *Muqarnas 10: Essays in Honor of Oleg Grabar* (1993), p. 160 for Attaleia.
13. Crane, "Evliya Çelebi's Journey," p. 160 on Malaria.
14. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 165, Bekker 90.

15. Hansgerd Hellenkemper and Friedrich Hild, *TIB 8: Lykien und Pamphylien I* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), p. 302, note 78.
16. *TIB 8*, p. 301, note 77 for this inscription.
17. Crane, “Evliya Çelebi’s Journey,” pp. 157–58.
18. On the Mardaites see Lawrence Conrad, “The Conquest of Arwād: A Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East,” in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. Averil Cameron and Lawrence Conrad (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992), pp. 317–401; M. Moosa, “The Relation of the Maronites of Lebanon to the Mardaites and al-Jarājima,” *Speculum* 44 (1969), pp. 597–608; and Hrach M. Bartikian, “He lyse tou ainigmatos ton Mardaiton,” in *Byzantium: Tribute to A. N. Stratos* (Athens, 1986), pp. 17–39.
19. *TIB 8*, p. 300 on Kos, transport and the Mardaites.
20. Gyula Moravcsik (ed.), Romilly J. H. Jenkins (tr.), *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: De Administrando Imperio* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), pp. 241–43.
21. *TIB 8*, p. 304, Gyula Moravcsik (ed.), Romilly J. H. Jenkins (tr.), *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: De Administrando Imperio* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), pp. 50, 169–212.
22. Gyula Moravcsik (ed.), Romilly J. H. Jenkins (tr.), *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: De Administrando Imperio* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), pp. 241–43.
23. Johannes H. Kramers and Gaston Wiet (eds.), *Ibn Hauqal: La Configuration de la Terre (Kitāb Sūrat al-ard)* (Beirut and Paris: G. P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1964), pp. 192–93.
24. John A. Cotsonis and John W. Nesbitt, “The Virgin *Aigyptia* (The Egyptian) on a Byzantine Lead Seal of Attaleia,” *Byzantion* 78 (2008), pp. 103–13, here pp. 111–13.
25. *TIB 8*, p. 303.
26. Shelomo D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 214.
27. Ioannes Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historion*, pp. 374–76, Thurn, pp. 398–99.
28. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 409–13, Bekker 224–29; Leon Diakonos, Books 1–2 for campaigning and heroism in Crete in Chares B. Hase (ed.), *Leonis Diaconi Caloënsis Historiae libri decem. Et Liber de velitatione bellica Nicephori Augusti* (Bonn: Weber, 1828), pp. 7–16 and 24–29, see Alice M. Talbott and Denis F. Sullivan (tr.), *The History of Leo the Deacon Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century for Translation* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2005), pp. 60–69 and 76–81 for the translation; Theodosios Diakonos

- in Hugo Criscuolo (ed.), *Theodosii Diaconi De Creta capta* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1979).
29. George T. Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Texts, 2010), pp. 502–9 on procuring materials for fleet; pp. 514–15 on training the navy.
 30. Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, pp. 526–27 on poisonous animals.
 31. R. Meiggs, *Trees and Timber in the Mediterranean World* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 154–88 and Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, p. 505 on lumber.
 32. Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, pp. 516–17.
 33. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 497, Bekker 273.
 34. Michael Psellos, *Ψελλοῦ πρὸς τὸν Βασιλέα καὶ κύριον Μιχαὴλ τὸν Δούκαν, Ἐπιλόσεις Σύντομοι Φυσικῶν Ζητημάτων* in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 122, col. 785C; Symeon Seth, *Σύνομις Φυσικῶν* in *Anecdota Atheniensia et alia* 2, ed. Armand Delatte (Paris: Université de Paris, 1939), pp. 31–33 for the spherical earth.
 35. *TIB* 8, p. 301.
 36. Based on personal family interviews.
 37. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 333.
 38. Eric McGeer (trans. and comm.), *The Land Legislation of the Macedonian Emperors* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2000), p. 60.
 39. Hugh Barnes and Mark Whittow, “The Oxford University/British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara Survey of Medieval Castles of Anatolia (1993). Yılanlı Kalesi: Preliminary Report and New Perspectives,” *Anatolian Studies* 44 (1994), p. 205 on local notables and their impact on local society.
 40. *TIB* 8, p. 303.
 41. *PG* 33, pp. 1419 ff; for a slightly different translation see Roderick Beaton, “The rhetoric of poverty: the lives and opinions of Theodore Prodromos,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 11 (1987), pp. 1–28; here pp. 3–4.



To the Capital Seeking Wisdom

Leaving Attaleia young Michael likely traveled toward Constantinople on one of the many freighters that called into his hometown harbor only to then carry forth in the direction of the capital with the wealth of the east in their holds. Attaleia's position, Northwest of Cyprus on a major trading avenue of antiquity, facilitated such a journey. Michael could have traveled overland through Asia Minor, yet this trip was only faster if undertaken on one of the imperial post's horses. To those, his family most likely had no access. The sea was therefore the easiest and conceivably most economic way to travel. Such a passage was nevertheless no trivial undertaking. His family would have planned it for months putting together clothes and household effects for the home Michael would set up in Constantinople. His itinerary likely unfolded over twenty or so days in the course of which he was exposed to the elements, but also to a series of exciting novel experiences in the various ports visited by his ship. In fact, it could all easily have lasted longer than the three weeks of a more or less direct journey from Attaleia to Constantinople given the peripatetic pace of commercial sea travel.

Long distance medieval travelers like Attaleiates likely sailed with the owner and possibly captain of the boat, his one or two sailors, and a number of other passengers, whose fare complemented the owner's income. The empire like every other medieval and ancient state did not possess fleets of passenger-carrying ferries. Travelers therefore shipped on freighters as living cargo next to the vessel's load of tradable goods. Conditions on board were consequently less than optimal, though for

a young man of Attaleiates' age this would all have seemed like a great adventure. The merchantman he boarded would be very much like the Serçe Limani wreck, meticulously studied by the team from the Institute of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A&M University. Fifteen meters in length, not too wide and relatively flat-bottomed, such a vessel was not particularly seaworthy. Its flat keel made it unstable, yet easy to draw into the shallow waters of the tiny rocky coves on the Aegean islands and the Asia Minor coast.

On the ship itself, Attaleiates likely occupied a small reserved compartment in the bow. Evidence suggests that passengers carried with them their personal effects but also board games, like chess and checkers, for entertainment during long hours of slow, languid sailing. The crew was often armed and likely comprised of sailors with years of prior service in Byzantium's navy. Much like many an airline pilot transferring fighter jet skills to the more prosaic world of civilian aviation, crews of the Byzantine merchant marine would sometimes remember the heady days of action on Romanía's oared galleys. Their sailing merchantman was a far cry from the fleet's longships and yet javelins, swords, and lances were carried as defenses against Aegean buccaneers and pirates. The ship was a self-contained world, a temporarily independent society that was bound together by a traveler's oath.¹ This society fed itself through fishing when other supplies run low, pushed back outside enemies, and respected the authority of the captain, whose powers were outlined by age-old stipulations of Roman law.

The nature and size of the vessels imposed a series of rather frequent stops at various Aegean ports where Michael would replenish his food supplies while the captain conducted his trade. The young Attaleiates would therefore have carried with him money with which to cover his basic expenses, yet his travel allowance would surely have extended beyond subsistence. Upon boarding the ship, he would have surrendered his pouch of coin to the captain for safekeeping, as required by law.² On this trip, Michael would have found himself in the company of fellow travelers. These acquaintances represented potential new social ties outside the protective environment of Attaleia, where family and neighborhood relations had defined his world. An interesting trader from the north encountered in any one of their ports of call, an erudite monk living on an Aegean island monastery, or even another Attaleiote crossing Michael's path could have occasioned spending on wine, a meal, or even a small gift. On his way to the capital, Attaleiates may even have himself

conducted some buying and selling, in order to supplement his income. Coming from a city linked to eastern markets, he could have been carrying among his household effects any number of tradable items, from linens and fruit to perfume and spices. Furthermore, there would likely have been sums of money earmarked as offerings to the famous Churches and monasteries visited in his ship's ports of call. A likely stop at Ephesos was surely coupled with a tour through the impressive ancient city ruins and a visit of the venerated shrine of Saint John, where Attaleiates would have had an opportunity to make an offering on behalf of his family.

A person traveling from one end of the polity to the other would have occasion to also reflect on a rather different form of travel while at Ephesos. A visit to the shrine of the Seven Sleepers would have taken Attaleiates into the realm of time travel. As a pilgrim in this holy site, he would have heard how seven Christians from the dark time of the persecuting Emperor Decius hid in a cave to escape death, only to fall asleep and wake up centuries later in a Christian empire. To Attaleiates, who later in life as a historian sought virtue in the distant world of the Roman Republic, such stories of miraculous journeys across the ages would no doubt have proven resonant.

Toward the end of his trip, with a string of islands from Rhodes, Kos, Patmos, Samos, Chios, and Lesbos, in the ship's wake, Michael would cast his eyes on Gallipoli. Past this fortified promontory lay the Hellespont and, further North and East, the Sea of Marmara. On his way to the capital, the captain most likely took to port in the imperial depot of Abydos in order to pay duties for the merchandise in his ship's holds. Abydos presented the traveler with an interesting spectacle. It retained its ancient grid pattern and was praised by travelers for its broad streets, beautiful houses, and bustling market. After leaving Abydos the boat sailed past Raideostos and Selymbria, cities on the north shore of the Marmara where Attaleiates would in time acquire land. In their harbors, outlets for the bountiful grain crop of Thrace, the captain could expect to load up and replace goods he had already sold on his way to the capital. As with modern cargo ship chartering, the true professional was judged by his capacity to keep a ship's holds full at all time. At Raideostos, the vibrant grain trade would guarantee, given the right timing, a good freight for the market of the capital.

Some three weeks after setting sail from Attaleia, Michael would be casting his expectant gaze on the walls of the capital gradually emerging

from beyond the horizon. The Golden Gate, imposing even from the waterline, and the roof of the monastery of Stoudios could both be seen close to the sea wall. Nearby, the roof tiles from buildings in the neighborhood of Psamatheia, home to St Euthymios' monastery, gave the area a sienna-like color, and at a short distance from it, on a hill, the column of Arkadios stood at the center of the homonymous forum. To the east, a series of ungainly buildings rising up from behind the sea walls marked the grain silo area in close proximity to the still active harbor of Theodosios and further in the direction of the rising sun the porphyry column of Constantine, with the statue of the first Christian emperor atop it announced the imposing dome of Hagia Sophia right behind it. A sixth-century poet described Constantinople's cathedral church as a beacon guiding sailors, a new Pharos, that welcomed the immigrant and the weary traveler.³ Closer to the water Attaleiates would discern the silhouettes of the palace buildings with the domes of Basileios I's *Nea Ekklesia* and other imperial reception rooms together constituting a dense monumental tableau. In the sea itself numerous boats of all sizes, from fishing skiffs to pleasure yachts and freighters went back and forth to the Asian coast unloading human and other cargo on a myriad private piers jutting out of the sea walls like weeds from the earth.⁴

Attaleiates' "ferry" could have moored at the Kontoskalion—also known as the harbor of Sophia, named after the energetic wife of the half-mad sixth-century Emperor Justin II. Here Michael would have found himself for the first time in his life in close proximity to the hub of imperial power, the palace rising on the hill to the east of the harbor. It is, however, equally possible that the captain sailed around the ancient Acropolis of the city of Byzantium, allowing Michael a vista on the churches of Saints Sergios and Bacchos, Hagia Sophia and Hagia Eirene, before entering the Golden Horn and mooring in the Neorion harbor. Merchants from all around the Mediterranean, sailors and marines of the imperial fleet, as well as local shop owners thronged in the neighborhood around the harbor, which alone was as large if not larger than the young traveler's hometown. Beyond, this area extended a city unlike any other in Europe with a bustling population of three to four hundred thousand men, women, and children. From here, accompanied by a family relative or perhaps by someone from the capital's community of Attaleiote expatriates, Michael started on his way to new quarters and a brand new life.

SEEKING KNOWLEDGE

Attaleiates arrived in the capital shortly before 1041. Much later in life, he reminisced in the pages of the *History* about his first eyewitness experience of high political drama in Constantinople. This was, he notes, the grand triumphal procession that Emperor Michael IV held in celebration of his Balkan victory over the rebel Deljan.⁵ This marked the young man's first exposure to imperial propaganda at its most extravagant and imposing. On a more informal level, Attaleiates had just entered a whole new world of political gossip. The city would at the time have been buzzing with stories of the emperor's infirmity. Such gossip fanned out of the palace by way of the great houses of the aristocracy. Men with position at court, the regular attendees of palace events, fed the capital's rumor mill. From their place in the courtly order, during ceremonial events, formal auditions, and casual conversations, they observed the emperor as he became weaker by the day, epilepsy slowly destroying him. When at home, they talked to their wives in the presence of servants, who in turn shared the hot new information with cooks in the kitchen. Once the latter walked out of the house to purchase groceries for the evening banquet, the emperor's sickness entered the realm of the market. It was now a hot commodity, or better still a public good, material for songs, ditties, and pamphlets as the people now shaped and disseminated stories about developments otherwise hidden from them behind tall walls and exclusive opulence.⁶

Over the years, the conscientious Michael IV had provided them with ample gossip. His rise to power had been the stuff of romance. Attaleiates' new acquaintances would have narrated stories about the time when his namesake, not yet emperor, was a most desirable young bachelor at court, a time when the empress could not keep her eyes off him and conspired with her courtiers to bring him to her presence.⁷ There was not much that Empress Zoe could do wrong. She was popular with Constantinopolitans and if she used Michael to murder her husband so that she could then get him in her bed, the people would understand.⁸ Romanos had, after all, been a bit of a buffoon and was known to keep a mistress himself. The people in the Capital learned to appreciate their new leader, who was dedicated to Romania's well-being, went to war for her sake and proved victorious. Attaleiates surely took the pulse of the capital's population, simply by talking to men and women in the streets, the market and around long tavern tables. In this

great city, he now acquired a novel perspective on the empire. He was no longer far from events, in a distant province feeding off on the faint echoes of Constantinopolitan developments. From his new standpoint, even his day-to-day interaction with common folk on the street was a form of civic education.

In the days soon after his arrival at the capital Attaleiates would have started looking for an instructor, since, after all, he had come to Constantinople in search of tutoring in law. Soon he joined the expanding circle of young men seeking knowledge and opportunity in advanced studies. The educational system of the empire, if we may use the term system for what was in effect an informal structure of studies, was broken down in three overlapping layers of basic, middle, and higher education. This breakdown was marked by a lack of concrete organization. There were no age limits and no rigid or restrictive terms of study. Such organizational chaos must be attributed to the fact that education existed in a rather unregulated private economy of knowledge. Even in fields where a modicum of state regulation appeared necessary, like for example the realm of legal studies, the acquisition of the requisite skills was in the hands of private tutors.⁹

Nothing like the five-year legal curriculum of the famous schools of Late Antiquity existed in eleventh-century Constantinople. Here law was but one discipline studied by individuals embarking on higher studies.¹⁰ Attaleiates confirms that when he thanks God for providing him “with sufficient education, first a general curriculum, then philosophy and rhetoric, and the holy initiation into laws,” while his contemporary Michael Psellos tells us that he had acquired his legal skills by exchanging his expertise in philosophy for the solid legal training of his friend and later-day *Guardian of the Laws* Ioannes Xiphilinos.¹¹ Psellos also explains that he taught philosophy to his friend Niketas, who went on to become dean in one of the capital’s schools. According to tenth-century sources, the middle tier of schooling focused on grammar, poetry, and rhetoric. Psellos, however, boasts that he could recite the *Iliad* by heart already by age ten, while shortly before turning sixteen, when he joined as an intern the staff of a provincial judge, he was taking courses in rhetoric. His experience suggests that the courses offered in the different tiers of available schooling were not strictly tied to specific age, but also that one’s engagement with any one discipline did not necessarily end at the edge of a given tier. Flux therefore marked a young man’s education.

Competition animated this fluid educational scene. Schools in eleventh-century Constantinople aggressively courted student loyalties and money. Christophoros Mytilinaios, a proud graduate and devotee of the School of Saint Theodore in the Sphorakiou neighborhood, dedicated bilious verses to the denigration of the headmaster of the rival School of the All-pure Virgin at Chalkoprateia:

Flee from this place! Let everyone run his fastest!
 Let no one come anywhere near this school!
 For Midas lives and sees the light again!
 and directs the All-pure Virgin's school.
 Why talk so much? Flee, everybody flee,
 before you are turned miserably into gold,
 seized by the rapacious hands of Midas,
 who sits there now and stretches them both,
 selling dictations to his pupils for money.¹²

On his part, Attaleiates clearly associates his move to Constantinople and its world of competitive learning with his quest for higher studies. Like other provincial men of his time, he likely completed the first two tiers of his schooling in his hometown. Had he moved to Constantinople earlier, he would probably have mentioned a relative or some other patron responsible for quartering him for the duration of his studies. We have no such information and can therefore plausibly assume that at roughly the same age when Psellos joined the staff of a provincial judge as a secretary, the sixteen-year-old Attaleiates arrived in the capital. His studies in Constantinople were to shape his cultural identity propelling him past obstacles that he faced on account of his provincial origins and outsider status. With such precious training, Attaleiates was able to, in time, become a member of the senate and advisor of emperors.

His move to the “Queen of Cities” could not have been better timed. In the early 1040s, Psellos was taking his first steps as a teacher in Constantinople while academic halls echoed with the lectures of Mauropous and Xiphilinos. Attaleiates offers no evidence regarding his own experience in this environment. We know nothing concrete regarding his instructors, yet it is rather likely that he either studied under, or at least audited some lectures by the intellectual superstars of his age. Among these men, Psellos claimed somewhat immodestly to have single-handedly revived the study of philosophy in the empire. Like Abelard

in twelfth-century Paris, Psellos wrote that he recruited students from beyond the empire's frontiers.¹³ It is hard to imagine that a young man studying in the capital at the time would have missed the opportunity to sample such lofty wisdom.

Attaleiates had received a Christian education from his parents. He owed his intellectual maturation, however, to a process of critical engagement with the world, its wonders, and Christianity itself. As a student in the era of Psellos, young Michael was exposed to ideas that unsettled some of his contemporaries. Psellos studied the world around him through the prism of reason and processed what he saw in a philosophical framework. Yet his immodest statements about his contribution to the body of knowledge available to the people of his time hide a more complex reality. Next to Psellos, a series of popular astronomers, astrologers, and all-round men of science offered Attaleiates and the other students in their classes a view of the natural world that was predicated upon empirical observation. The study of astronomy and its handmaiden, astrology, becomes here a byword for the broader spirit of "scientific enquiry" permeating the eleventh-century intellectual endeavor. Thus in discussing earthquakes, a common talking point among Constantinopolitans precariously perched on the edges of the seismically active Anatolian fault, Psellos was but one man among many proposing interesting theoretical explanations to nature's mysteries. In his hands, the classicizing curriculum of the Roman classroom became much more than training for an elite that spoke an alien form of Greek. Through Psellos' lectures, antiquity and its texts emerged as tools for the dissection, analysis, and reconstitution of contemporary reality, both natural and moral.

All this did not unfold in a cultural void. In the years that followed the reign of Michael IV, Emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos emerged as a strong patron of education. A potent symbol of this emperor's commitment to enquiry can be found in the following episode. At some point during his reign, Konstantinos imported a giraffe and an elephant to the capital, animals with which to emphasize the empire's global reach. To some, the move no doubt seemed like an attempt to compete with Rome's ancient glory. Most people attending palace ceremonies had stepped on mosaics that depicted monkeys, palm trees, and a world of North African exoticism that some four centuries past lay in the emperor's ambit. While this was certainly no longer the case, Romans in the eleventh century felt confident about their place in their world

and the exotic creatures in the emperor's bestiary spoke to this sense of confidence.

On this occasion, however, imperial propaganda also served the curiosity of naturalists, who could now expand on encyclopedic work by their tenth-century predecessors through direct observation. One can only imagine public lectures before those majestic beasts, lectures likely followed by an interested and approving imperial patron and his coterie of officials. As a student, Attaleiates sampled this heady intellectual environment and records in the *History* the arrivals of those beasts (Fig. 5.1).¹⁴

In this era of curiosity, sacred tenets of the Byzantine worldview were inevitably challenged as in the words of a colleague “the orthodoxy of culture – the definition and content of right thinking – became increasingly flexible, diverse, and inclusive of contradictions.”¹⁵ This is evident in the writings of Attaleiates' fellow courtier, the astronomer/astrologer Symeon Seth, who questioned the ideas of the great Ptolemy on the coordinates of the stars on the night sky. Seth confidently argued in favor of new astronomical calculations and suggested that the wisdom and observations of the modern (Arabic speaking and Muslim) Egyptians surpassed that of the Hellenistic Greeks.¹⁶ His audacity becomes fully apparent when we realize that Ptolemy's astronomical work and his theories on the relationship between the earth and the sun (which Seth did in fact not challenge) were only conclusively disproved with the work of Nicolaus Copernicus in the sixteenth century.

Seth was by no means alone at court. In 1063, Sergios the Persian, a *protospatharios* and *Hypatos*, commissioned an astrolabe, the single such instrument surviving from Byzantium. The otherwise unknown Sergios cuts an interesting figure. His titles place him well within the sphere of the Byzantine court and it is for us to speculate about his specific duties in the empire's administration. While we can in no way safely presume that he was a judge, like Attaleiates, he nevertheless appears to have belonged to similar circles. His sobriquet, the Persian, was likely a classical allusion to his Near Eastern origins placing him among a broad circle of Christian Syrians and Mesopotamians frequenting Romanía's court at the time. Even more fascinating is Sergios' sense of self, as this emerges from a careful study of the astronomical organ he commissioned and bequeathed to posterity. On the astrolabe itself, Sergios had the following sentence inscribed: “decree and command of Sergios *protospatharios* and *Hypatos* man of science in the month of July, fifteenth indiction, year 6570.”



Fig. 5.1 Exoticism on the palace floors

Here then we have an individual well placed in a medieval court, treating science as a defining element of his identity. It seems that he was not alone. In fact, Attaleiates' eleventh-century circles echoed loud with debates among intellectuals regarding the workings of the world and the firmament. So much is clear from Psellos' public lectures and private correspondence. While a rigorist minority among the members of the church advocated a narrow path of interpretation that focused on God's will as the organizing principle behind life as humans experienced it, men like Psellos and Sergios pushed the boundaries of inquiry and asked questions that surely raised some eyebrows.

Rational inquiry appears to have defined the identity of numerous courtiers in the eleventh century. However, much of what we treat as Byzantine science did not display what we would today describe as proper scientific method. The answers to the questions asked by modern science were never straightforward in the Middle Ages and in any case they were usually sought in books and traditions that harked back to a pre-Christian era. Works of Ptolemy, Galen, Aristotle, and Eraseistratos are but few of the corpora that shaped medieval Roman notions and the practice of science. Hallowed works of scientific thought were not, however, the only means by which Romans in the Middle Ages sought to understand nature. In Attaleiates' personal collection, we find a *seismobrontologeion*, a manual on thunder and earthquakes, which the judge apparently consulted even as he no doubt read more formal works of science. The distinction, clearer in our day, between science and parascientific pursuits and works was somewhat harder to draw in Attaleiates' time. What was it then about earthquakes and thunder that fascinated eleventh-century erudites and spurred his interest?

Perhaps the question needs to be reformulated and redirected: What was it about those phenomena that piqued the interest of tenth-century Emperor Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos, who stipulated that books of divination should always be carried by the emperor when on campaign?¹⁷ What benefit would a military campaign accrue from that kind of knowledge? The answer to this question may only emerge if we set aside modern ideas of causation. While books on earthquake and thunder were not what we would today describe as scientific works, they nevertheless represented a form of knowledge, which in medieval eyes had very practical applications. The reader of a *seismobrontologeion* was not an irrational obscurantist. He was rather an interpreter of correlations, who sought to link specific natural phenomena with forthcoming events in human life

and history through assessment of past event pairs. By studying earthquake and thunder, he in effect looked to gain a modicum of control over future events. Like an observer of the skies, associating constellations and the positions of stars with specific historical outcomes, the user of a *seismobrontologeion* sought to control the future. Modern readers of positivist bent will with reason find such an approach to decision-making problematic and may be appalled by the idea that the head of a well-constituted polity and his closest advisors would go to battle with such books in hand. Before, however, we deliver too harsh a verdict on the medieval Romans we should perhaps remember the astrologer frequently consulted by Ronald and Nancy Reagan, perfect modern counterparts to our Byzantine heroes. A world of inquiry familiar to modern sensibilities coexisted in Constantinople's classrooms with theories and practices stereotypically associated with the pre-modern. The phenomenon, medieval as it appears to the modern reader, is not peculiarly Byzantine in character. The Warden and Master of the Royal Mint in the seventeenth century, Sir Isaac Newton, was both founder of modern physics and an alchemist still dabbling with pre-modern ideas.

If science and philosophy were popular disciplines in eleventh-century Constantinople, literature and the classics were equally important in shaping Attaleiates' character. Yet, next to the serious and morally uplifting texts of rhetors, tragic poets, and historians, Attaleiates would have found works bound to excite his imagination in less than edifying fashion. Achilles Tatios with his unabashed celebration of the senses would have spiced any adolescent's dreams by writing that:

When she reaches the peak of erotic desire, a woman loses control in pleasure; she kisses with mouth agape and flays as if mad. Now tongues commune, one kissing the other in a rush. As for you, you heighten the pleasure by opening your mouth. As she reaches Aphrodite's summit, the woman pants under the influence of scorching pleasure. Her breath now rises quickly to the lips with love's spirit. Here it encounters a stray kiss, drifting and looking to descend beneath. Wheeling about the kiss joins the love spirit and follows it, seeking to strike the heart.¹⁸

Leukippe and Kleitophon, likely written in cosmopolitan Alexandria during the Roman era was a popular subject among Psellos' students. Psellos in fact lectured on the merits of this work in relation to Heliodoros' *Charikleia*. Like the learned ninth-century patriarch Photios, Psellos

expresses some concerns about the sensual nature of the work, a nod to conservative forces always on the look for moral deviation. Yet, his critique notwithstanding, Psellos taught the text, and men like Attaleiates most likely found love in it before they sought it in seedy taverns and, eventually, in the capital's bridal scene. Cruder readings of the age-old story of love and lust were also available in the *Palatine Anthology*, a text popular among the capital's readers.

Melisa (Bee) in your works you are like your flower-loving namesake.
 This I know, and I keep this knowledge in my heart.
 As you sweetly kiss me, honey drips from your lips,
 Yet as you ask for payment, with your sting you incur a cruel wound.¹⁹

Such stimuli to youthful desires notwithstanding, Attaleiates, like most contemporary intellectuals, tells us nothing of his love life prior to his marriage. We know not if he was a shy young man or if like a twelfth-century monk “with the aid of his fleshy crowbar” courted the love and money of a widow.²⁰ In any case if the compiler of the *Palatine Anthology* was, after all, a priest and if the clergy was known to frequently dip their pen in such scandal, we cannot expect a young man, studying in this most exciting and free of times, to have remained above carnal temptation. Whatever Attaleiates may have experienced in the world of Constantinopolitan taverns and inns—a world, which Psellos himself was happy to describe when sharing with his friends details of the bawdy priest Elias' misadventures—he put it all behind him when he decided to marry at some point early in the 1050s. The provincial student from Attaleia was now setting roots in the capital and slowly embarking upon the task of establishing himself as a respectable up-and-comer. This, however, brings us to the problem of his household and later-day economic activities, and inevitably shifts the discussion to a later period and a whole different set of questions, to be addressed in the next chapter.

In April 1079, nearly forty years after Attaleiates' arrival in the capital, the Emperor Nikephoros Botaneiates awarded him a decree confirming a previous grant of immunity for lands that the judge had attached to his monastery and poorhouse. In the introduction to this rather technical document, the imperial scribes responsible for its compilation noted that the *magistros* and judge Michael Attaleiates was distinguished among his contemporaries for his learning. They explained that as a man of culture he was to enjoy imperial benefactions.²¹ The emperor's ghostwriters, some

of them perhaps Attaleiates' old schoolmates, linked culture and material rewards, declaring the former as the highest achievement of any society. As suggested by the preamble to the imperial decree, it was in the interest of the emperor to appear before his subjects as a patron of culture and the arts. Attaleiates' parents long dead by then, would have been happy to note that their initial investment in their son's education had more than paid off. By the late 1070s, Attaleiates was no longer just a well-regarded judge, loyally serving successive administrations. He was also an erudite, a cultural asset, pride of his master the emperor of the Romans.

WALKING DOWN THE STREET

With words that would be met by understanding nods in many a faculty lounge today, Michael Psellos complained about his students' tendency to be late in class and excuse themselves by blaming the weather and city traffic.²² Attaleiates himself experienced such traffic for a significant part of his long career at the courts. We have reasons to believe that his home was located in the area of Psamatheia close to the monastery of St John of Stoudios.²³ His daily itinerary from the southwestern side of the city, to the covered Hippodrome by the palace grounds would therefore take him down the capital's central avenue, the *mese* in a trajectory that faced head-on the rising sun. As senator and member of Constantinople's courts, Attaleiates did not travel on foot. He likely took in the changing scenery from his saddle.

In all likelihood, he set out on this daily journey from the southern side of the *mese*, which was also the most densely populated part of Psamatheia. To the north as he moved further away from the Marmara Sea, he encountered but sparse habitation in a space not too different from the gardens and farmland outside the city walls. On this side of the city, between the Theodosian and Constantinian walls the inhabitants of Constantinople kept gardens that produced a large part of the legumes consumed locally. This was also the area of the capital's great cisterns, where rainwater was stored to supplement the flow of the city aqueduct. Here, nestled in suburban groves, owls hooted all night to the annoyance of local inhabitants. The poet Christophoros Mytilinaios, who dwelled in another part of town, memorialized in a poem his frustration with the loquaciousness of Constantinople's feathered night predators.²⁴ The judge in effect lived in the medieval equivalent of a large city suburb in Constantinople's fourteenth region. Psamatheia had its own

markets and local businesses, which would have allowed its inhabitants not to venture far from their homes for most of their needs. The private wooden piers by the sea walls also opened the area to the outside world obviating the need for tiresome treks to the city's grand harbors. There was even a noted local center of piety. The monastery of St. John of Stoudios raised the area's profile in Constantinople's sacred map. The small town nature of settlement made the neighborhood more of a face-to-face society, where people likely interacted on first name basis. As a real estate owner with his own monastery in the area, Attaleiates actively participated in neighborhood life. He played patron and was involved in people's lives like any man of influence would (Fig. 5.2).

Moving East Attaleiates approached the remains of the Constantinian walls, which marked the city's fourth-century contours and, passing through the original Golden Gate, soon entered the forum of Arkadios, where he came upon the area grocers. The neighborhood was still suburban and close enough to the garden areas on the north side of the *mese*. Among the crates and carts filled with vegetables, he would see the towering column of Arkadios. The statue of that hapless emperor had crashed to the ground in the eighth century, yet for those in the know the column remained an ironic reminder of the Roman Empire's division and of

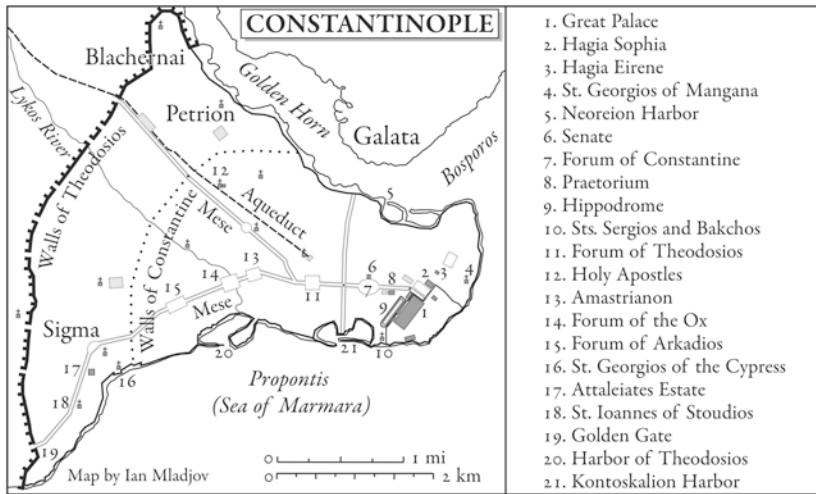


Fig. 5.2 Map of Constantinople

imperial failure. The craftsmanship on it was nevertheless still celebrated in the eleventh century, carved reliefs relating martial stories from a distant Roman past. A tenth-century poet described it as a stone sentinel standing guard by the city ramparts.²⁵ The same man also wrote of the winding staircase housed within the column that led anyone fit enough to climb it all the way to a platform with stunning views over the city. In the last years of Attaleiates' life, the daily encounter with this monument would have evoked the very real contemporary military and political crisis, which he was in the process of recording in his historical work.

Leaving the open fields behind him, Attaleiates now set his eyes upon more densely built areas of urban settlement. Eleventh-century Constantinople was not neatly segregated along class lines. Here poor and rich lived next to each other. Aristocratic mansions stood next to the city's seedier streets, major monuments abutted low-income housing. Series of multistoried buildings with three, four, and even five floors precariously stacked on top of one another blocked the eyes' view with their irregular shapes, sizes, and the different colors: white, yellow, or even blue plastered on their walls.²⁶ The sea of private living quarters was studded with the larger abodes of the more affluent citizens and with islands of public space; a church, a fountain, a statue or monument, shops, and open areas of exchange.

To Attaleiates, this densely settled area represented a source of endless legal headaches. As a judge, he likely faced regular lawsuits regarding zoning violations and building code infractions. Neighbors could be your best friends, providing support in times of crisis, but also vicious enemies once it came to property disputes. The quest for light in this maze of narrow streets and tall structures was surely the cause of much litigation. A lawsuit brewed every time a homeowner added an extra floor to her building. High walls frequently blocked the view to the Sea of Marmara and the breeze, both protected by law, while buildings more often than not came closer than twelve feet to neighboring homes depriving them of precious hours of sun exposure. Less light meant higher heating costs in Constantinople's humid winter. Like modern-day Greeks and Turks, Constantinopolitans were imaginative ekistic cheats, finding ingenious ways to squeeze an extra square foot of livable space out of restrictive layouts.²⁷ The problems arising from urban lawsuits were a constant reminder of Constantinople's status as New Rome. Legislation dealing with urban planning was, after all, a direct outcrop of problems faced by the metropolises of the ancient world, among which imperial Rome had been the greatest and most litigious.

In this denser urban landscape, the purer air of the fields gave way to the more aggressive scents of sewers, spices from a myriad kitchens, and the sea of infrequently washed humanity. The different smells were coupled by a change in the faces around Attaleiates. The first beggars appeared as thicker habitation brought with it greater opportunity for revenue.²⁸ With them came merchants with their shops lining the *mesē*. To be sure, the area was also home to criminals and crooks perhaps known to the judge from prior appearances before the city courts. Loiterers cased homes in hopes of a lucrative break-in and people were loath to leave their apartments unattended for more than a day or two for fear of burglaries.²⁹

Yet another change, an almost imperceptible one, made the trip more intriguing. The city's geophysical layout was not something that Attaleiates would have consciously registered on his daily routine. It was nevertheless there, defining his experience. It is easy to ignore the lay of the land when thinking of Constantinople with the aid of two-dimensional maps. Even the modern visitor, who takes advantage of the relatively cheap rates of taxis, may fail to adequately account for the city's hilly nature. The moment, however, we step on our feet and take a walk around Istanbul we are struck, as undoubtedly the medieval traveler was, by the undulating landscape. The city's hills had a direct impact on Attaleiates' senses. From the *xerolophos*, where the forum of Arkadios was located to the forum of the ox that came next, much changed. At a distance to the east, Attaleiates would see the statue of the first Christian emperor on its column. To the south, the sea glittered through the openings of alleys that separated row upon row of houses. Due North and East, immediately before him lay the valley of the Lykos. This river was no longer visible, as Roman engineering encased its course soon after the city's foundation in order to protect the area from flash floods and claim the lower parts of the valley for urban development. Its course nevertheless represented an important geophysical marker and defined one of the two larger valleys within the city walls. Where the river met the sea one found the still bustling, if quite silted, fifth-century harbor of Theodosios with its mixed commercial and military anchorage. Slightly to its north, atop the river's course was the forum of the ox.

From an administrative perspective the area belonged to the jurisdiction of the Count of the Lamia, the person responsible for supervising the state grain silos. Even if the yearly grain dole instituted in Rome at the time of Julius Caesar was no longer offered to Constantinopolitans in the eleventh century, Attaleiates likely kept in

touch with the Count's office.³⁰ As a judge he would have more than once in his career presided over cases involving the state grain management system and the city's private bakeries. He was, after all, himself an owner of a mule-powered mill and may even have processed state grain in this facility. Due North-Northwest from the forum of the ox, Attaleiates could perhaps see the silhouette of the aqueduct of Valens that bridged two of the city's tallest hills, the third and the fourth (Fig. 5.3).

The fourth-century structure was renovated early in the eleventh century better to support the city's growing population. Extending from Attaleiates' vantage point at the forum of the ox a large city avenue traversed the valley between those hills, passed under the aqueduct, and then gently rolled toward the Golden Horn. He left this road to his left and instead proceeded toward the Amastrianon Forum, past the richly endowed Myrelaion monastery where the tenth-century Emperor Romanos Lekapenos was buried. At this point, the southern section



Fig. 5.3 The aqueduct of Valens

of the *mese* linked with its northern branch, which left toward the gate of Charisios and extended from there all the way to Adrianople. From here on, roughly one kilometer separated Attaleiates from his office at the covered Hippodrome. He hardly had time to think of this, however, as he now faced pandemonium created by numerous steeds led to the local market by the area's horse breeders. People's clothing and faces changed once again, as richer Constantinopolitans, with pouches ample enough to match a horse's steep price, sought an aristocratic presence atop the medieval equivalent of a luxury car. With prices starting at four gold coins for a donkey and going all the way to upwards of fifty *nomismata*, ten times the yearly salary of a poor worker, the beasts at the Amastrianon attracted a choice crowd.

Here the city was at its densest. The *mese* itself was now a huge shopping district with all sorts of businesses lining the walls of the buildings on either side. The flow of this long market street was interrupted by the forum of Theodosius, a vast public plaza modeled on Rome's forum of Trajan (Fig. 5.4).

Fragments from the columns that supported the monumental arches leading one into the forum can still be seen in Istanbul today. Like branches stripped of smaller twigs, they resemble upstanding clubs and symbolized the Pillars of Hercules, evoking Rome's vast imperial reach and Theodosius' Spanish ancestry. Then came the forum of Constantine, with its two elliptical *stoas*, the senate house, and the porphyry column with the statue of the first Christian emperor on it. Locals called this repurposed statue of Apollo the Anti-Sun, Anelios, as it was likely one of the first points of the city landscape to face the sun rising in the east from behind ridges in Asia Minor. Passing by the senate house Attaleiates could not but gaze at the ancient relief composition on its bronze doors, described in the tenth century by Konstantinos the Rhodian in the following words:

The giants [appear] with their feet turned inwards and coiled underneath them like serpents ... and the snakes, as if with flickering tongues, bellow terribly. They are grim to look at, and their eyes flash fire, so that those who gaze at them are in fright and trembling, and their hearts are filled with horror and fear.

It would be interesting to ponder Attaleiates' reaction to such intricate and explicitly pagan art. In the *History*, he openly expressed admiration for ancient Roman piety and virtue. Did this monument engender yet



Fig. 5.4 The Pillars of Hercules: Columns from the triumphal arc at the Theodosian forum

another moment of reflection on Byzantine failings and pagan Roman success or did he respond in a rather more Orthodox manner noting with Konstantinos the Rhodian that:

With such errors was the stupid race of [pagan] Greece deceived, and gave an evil veneration to the indecency of vain impieties. But the great and wise Constantine brought [these sculptures] here to be a sport for the city, to be a plaything for children, and a source of laughter for men.³¹

One day, on his commute to work, Attaleiates no doubt stumbled upon the large crowd of curious men, women, and children. They were looking astonished at debris brought down from under the feet of the sainted emperor's effigy, which now stood somewhat precariously atop the porphyry column in the middle of the forum. The metal joints securing the bronze statue on the capital crowning the column had been struck by lightning that somehow spared the statue itself. Some linked the event

to the empire's declining fortunes, while others opened conversations on the causes of lightning itself. Attaleiates could not help but record elements of this debate, which pitted the astrologizing, science-leaning *mathematikoi* against what in his mind was the ignorant populace:

The *mathematikoi* suggest from the science of nature that the fire is of a river-like nature, generated by the crash and breakdown of clouds. It is extremely fine and dashing against resisting objects with unspeakable impetus the thunder brings about a violent and sudden burst. And they say that the lightning fire is so naturally fine that it cannot harm thin objects or any porous body with small pores, such as the veils from among the fabrics. Thus if it happens that lightning falls upon a girdle made of linen or cotton, or upon a cloak woven out of any other material layered with gold, it changes the nature of the gold and turns it into a metal blob as if in a fiery furnace, while leaving the body of the fabric unharmed. The same is true with humans, for lightning enters the body through barely visible pores and spreads about the interior organs because of their greater materiality and the fact that they have no pores, while the exterior of the body is not burned and is found hollow, left without the entrails. As for common people, they counter that a really large dragon-like serpent is the cause of all this, as it is grabbed by some invisible force and with claws and the force of its innate harshness it crushes with its maneuvers whatever comes in its way, wherever it happens that with its spasms and resistance it fought and struggled against what held him.³² (Fig. 5.5)

In this same area, next to the senate house the judge encountered the famous statue of Athena, whose destruction by the Crusaders was to shock the statesman and historian Niketas Choniates, writing some 130 years after Attaleiates.³³ Further down the road was the *praetorium*, the seat of the eparch, the city's mayor and one of the Constantinople's main legal figures. Here Attaleiates encountered colleagues, paralegal workers, and court secretaries. These people constituted his social circle and became the pool out of which later in life he recruited monks for his own monastery. By now, he was indeed caught up in traffic. Men on horseback, carts, and scores of people thronging around the shops made for slow progress. Yet he was finally close to the Hippodrome, the palace grounds, his place of work.

Adjacent to the palace, the Hippodrome was along with the forum of Constantine and Hagia Sophia the center of Constantinople's civic life. Hardly Christian in character, the Hippodrome was the stage for political interaction between the emperor and his subjects. Legal documents



Fig. 5.5 The porphyry column of Constantine

from Attaleiates' lifetime confirm that both men and women visited the Hippodrome. A date at the races between a married woman and a man other than her husband could be cause for divorce.³⁴ Numerous such cases were likely kept in file in the vast cavernous space under the Hippodrome's bleachers, which since before the sixth century had been used as storage for the empire's legal archives.³⁵ Case upon case adjudicated by the city courts found its place in those archives. We have no way of knowing how well, the ancient fifth- and sixth-century documents survived by Attaleiates' time, yet a walk through the stacks of legal briefs was no doubt a journey into a time when the empire still spoke the language of Roman jurisprudence. It is unclear how many, if any, of Attaleiates' colleagues read Latin. Roman law was indeed the law of the land, only by the eleventh century it was dressed in Greek garb. Either way, Attaleiates' assizes by the imperial palace grounds, not too far from this archive, allowed for relatively easy access to and consultation of myriad pages of legal precedent and old case work.

At the end of a long day at court, with interest rates, loan contracts, lawsuits over dowries, and calls for demarcation of estates still buzzing in his head, Attaleiates retraced his steps on his way home. His commute, from home to workplace and back, was repeated day in, day out for some thirty years. This trajectory marked more than a trip through Constantinople's landscape. From Psamatheia and the vicinity of the Golden Gate to the Hippodrome, Attaleiates traced on a daily basis the footsteps of emperors who for centuries had staged triumphal processions in celebration of their victories over the empire's barbarian foes. For the judge, this was a daily celebration of his own triumphal arrival at the Constantinopolitan social scene. In fact, in January 1069 he may for once have marched down the *mesē* along the emperor and his troops in celebration of Romanos' triumphal return from the Syrian campaign that culminated with the conquest of Hierapolis. At the end of each day, he retraced his steps when he left the center of town on his way back home, the city slowly settling down to its night rhythms.

NOTES

1. Walter Ashburner (ed. and trans.), *The Rodian Sea-Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), p. 3 [II.15].
2. Ashburner, *The Rhodian Sea-Law*, p. 3. [II.14], p. 20 [III.13], and p. 22 [III.17].

3. Claudio de Stefani (ed.), *Silentiarius, Paulus: Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae, Descriptio Ambonis* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 62–63.
4. Ioannes Mauropous, *Poems*, pp. 272–74, poem 127 for Fishing; Cramer, *Anecdota Graeca*, pp. 275–76 for Byzantine yachting, with revelers reciting poetry in the open sea off the capital; Attaleiates, *History*, p. 507, Bekker 279 on private wooden piers jutting off the walls of the city.
5. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 15, Bekker 10.
6. Ioannes Mauropous, *Poems*, pp. 424–25, poem 53 on pamphlets.
7. Psellos, *Chronographia* III.18–24 (Renaud, pp. 44–52).
8. Ioannes Mauropous, *Poems*, pp. 436–37, poem 55.
9. Z. R. Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture and the Roman Legal Tradition, 867–1056* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 162–83 on legal education in Byzantium from the sixth to the eleventh-century.
10. Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, pp. 163–64.
11. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 337; Konstantinos Sathas (ed.), *Mesaionike Bibliothekhe* IV (Paris, 1874), p. 427; Translation in Anthony Kaldellis and Ioannis Polemis, *Psellos and the Patriarchs: Letters and Funeral Orations for Keroularios, Leichoudes and Xiphilinos* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2015), p. 185.
12. Christophoros Mytilinaios, *Poems*, p. 19, poem 11.
13. Psellos, *Chronographia* VI.37 (Renaud, p. 135) on Reviving Philosophy; Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 35–37, Bekker 21 on Psellos’ as wisest of men.
14. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 87–89, Bekker 48–50.
15. Paul Magdalino, “From ‘Encyclopaedism’ to ‘Humanism’: the Turning Point of Basil II and the Millennium,” in *Byzantium in the Eleventh Century: Being in Between*, ed. Marc D. Lauxtermann and Mark Whittow (2017), p. 4.
16. Paul Magdalino, “The Byzantine Reception of Classical Astrology,” in *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed., Catherine Holmes and Judith Waring (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 46–49, 53–54.
17. Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos, *De Ceremoniis*, vol. 1, p. 467.
18. Achilles Tatius, *Leukippe and Kleitophon*, 2.37. Loose translation mine.
19. Marcus Argentarius from the *Palatine Anthology* in William R. Paton trans., *The Greek Anthology* 1 (London: William Heinemann, 1916), p. 144 for the Greek.
20. Paul Magdalino, “Cultural Change? The Context of Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos,” in *Poetry and Its Contexts in Eleventh Century Byzantium*, ed. Floris Bernard and Kristoffel Demoen (Ashgate: Farnham, 2012), p. 27 on Tzetzes, *Historiae* 91–92.
21. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 363.

22. Anthony R. Littlewood (ed.), *Michaelis Pselli Oratoria Minora* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1985), pp. 76–82 orations 21 and 22 on students' late arrival in class.
23. Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline*, p. 235 on localization.
24. Christophoros Mytilinaios, *Poems*, p. 279, poem 131.
25. Constantine the Rodian in Liz James (ed.), *Constantine of Rhodes, On Constantinople and the Church of the Holy Apostles* (Ashgate: Farnham, 2012), p. 35, lines 216–19 for the spiral staircase, p. 37, lines 253–55 on the guardian of the walls.
26. Nicetas Choniates' *History* on Houses and Colours in Jan L. van Dieten (ed.), *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* (Berlin and New York, 1975), p. 634.
27. Armenopoulos, *Hexabiblos* 2.4.28 on four and five story buildings; Justinian, *Code*, 8.10.9 on distance between public and private buildings, 8.10.11 on balconies, 8.10.12.2–2a on respect of neighbor's light and view; Justinian, *Novels* 63, 165 on the protection of the view to the sea; Justinian, *Digest*, Book 8.2.2–4, 8.2.10–11 on obstruction of light; Koukoules, volume 4 page 289 on layouts and dense construction.
28. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 502–3, Bekker 275–76 on beggars.
29. Virgil S. Crisafulli and John W. Nesbitt (ed. and trans.), *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium. Supplemented by a Reprinted Greek Text and an Essay by John F. Haldon* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 115.
30. Alexander P. Kazhdan, "Komes tes Lamias," *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 2, p. 1139; Paul Magdalino, "The Maritime Neighborhoods of Constantinople: Commercial and Residential Functions, Sixth to Twelfth Centuries," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2001), p. 213 on the Lamia horea located close to the port of Theodosios; "The Grain Supply of Constantinople, Ninth-Twelfth Centuries," in *Constantinople and Its Hinterland*, ed. Gilbert Dagron and Cyril Mango (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 1995), p. 37 on the *komes tes lamias*.
31. Henry Maguire, "The Profane Aesthetic in Byzantine Art and Literature," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999), pp. 194–95 for the translation.
32. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 567–69, Bekker 311.
33. Niketas Choniates' *History* in Jan. L. van Dieten (ed.), *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1975), pp. 558–59.
34. Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, p. 94; *Peira* 25.23.
35. Ioannes Lydos, *De Magistratibus* 3.19 in Anastasius C. Bandy ed., *Ioannes Lydos. On Powers or the Magistracies of the Roman State* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1983), p. 162, lines 2–5.



CHAPTER 6

Attaleiates' Household

When the young Michael first arrived in Constantinople, he was likely on some sort of family dole. In that respect, his years as a student in the capital mirrored those of young men and women today who tap into painstakingly built college funds on their way to a university education that will, with some luck, make them financially independent. Attaleiates may have benefited from the assistance of expatriate Pamphylians in the capital, it is certain, however, that he mainly relied on his family's support for at least some time. Such support would not have been an insignificant burden on his parents' household. The young man's yearly bread would cost some four gold coins, while a steady diet of Bosphorus catch would put him back an extra *nomisma*.¹ Food, however, would be but part of his family's expenses. For twenty to thirty gold coins, Michael could own a servant who would prepare his meals, clean his quarters, and perform all the chores that his now distant mother and family staff could no longer undertake. Romanía was after all a slave-owning polity. Attaleiates' mother, described by the author himself as very orthodox and pious, must also have fortified him with a Psalter or a book of Scripture. A moderately priced copy of such edifying works would sell for about one gold coin. Of more practical concern, a cloak, truly necessary in Constantinople's rainy climate, would add another *nomisma* to Michael's costs. Similar sums would need to be disbursed for a nice belt and anywhere between three and six gold coins would buy formal, though by no means silk, attire for ceremonial occasions. Clothing therefore must have figured prominently in Attaleiates' parents budget, as

education would offer their son no advantages were he not able to properly display his newly acquired knowledge and rhetorical skills in a formal setting. Appearances mattered as the poetry of the time attests:

You have no bronze, and neither staff nor shoes,
And, what is more, you do not have two robes.
Without wishing it, Leo, you lead an apostolic life.²

Rent, which represents today a significant outlay for parents paying for their child's away-from-home education, did not have to be crippling for Attaleiates' family.³ Homes could be rented in the capital for as low as a gold coin a year though nothing tells us whether these were lodgings in livable, safe quarters or dirty holes in a maze of dark, muddy back alleys.⁴ It is thus likely that Attaleiates' parents spent quite a bit more to ensure that their son's abode matched his social aspirations. These then are but a few items from a longer list of costs that Attaleiates' parents surely incurred in their effort to offer him a safe path to a lucrative state career. Tallied-up, all this amounted to a one-time investment of up to a pound of gold for the setup of Michael's household in the capital, followed by annual living expenses amounting to tens of gold coins. The scale of the expense itself can therefore help one speculate about the rough size and income of the household in which Attaleiates grew up. It also set the parameters for what he hoped to achieve by the end of his studies as he sought employment.

Having established his student's household, Michael was now free to roam the capital's classrooms exposing himself to the sights, sounds, people, and ideas of this vibrant city. Teachers and new acquaintances from the world of the lecture halls would also have introduced Attaleiates to a wide array of men and women from the capital's professional classes. It is perhaps from this moment on that he also started looking for a life partner in earnest. Sadly Attaleiates' personal life, the intimacy of youthful romance, the hopes and heartache of family affairs are a casualty of time. We will never know if a classmate's sister attracted his gaze or if it was the daughter of a city merchant who first spurred in him the desire for a woman's company and the thought of marriage. The little we know about his personal life is drawn from his monastic charter and is therefore unsentimental, technical, and linked to dry clauses for the commemoration of his deceased wives. The details of his married life are otherwise unknown. As in the case of Psellos, who offers a richer tableau of family affairs, the portrait of the wife is absent. We thus cannot

say if Attaleiates was at all influenced in his choice of life partner by the epigrammatist of the *Palatine Anthology*, who noted:

I want her neither too young to wed, not too old,
for the young one I pity while the old one I respect
Neither unripe grape, nor shriveled raisin, for my heart desires
mature beauty companion to my love.⁵

Looks and youth mattered and were evidently celebrated in Attaleiates' time much as they are today. In a powerful display of rhetorical prowess, Psellos described every aspect of a young virgin's body, moving from breasts to waist, flanks, thighs, legs, and finally ankles. In the process, he compared her body to the statue of Aphrodite of Knidos pointing out that according to myth "a certain man fell in love and embraced it sexually, so taken was he by the beauty of the statue."⁶ To be sure the reader is introduced to this passage by equally compelling descriptions of the girl's eyes, lips, and hair, yet the allusion to the awakening of erotic desire in the beholder of the celebrated ancient statue nudges one down the path of sensuality and sexual yearning. This is not the place to discuss the reasons behind Psellos' decision to sexualize the portrait of his recently departed underage daughter. We are rather interested in the mere fact that such descriptions were ever put to paper and that there was in fact an audience for them. Were looks and sensual pleasure then what Attaleiates and his contemporaries sought in their bride? Or did they perhaps want her to live "a quiet and untroubled life" in pious isolation, knowing little

about everyone, not about the happening in the marketplace, not in the palace... For she blocked out of her ears all superfluous speech and knew neither crowded marketplace, nor whether any part of the city populace was in tumult... But if someone professed virtue, regardless of whether they were men or women, these she would indiscriminately gather and assemble around herself from afar.⁷

In the twelfth-century romance *The Story of Hysmine and Hysminias* the first encounter of the young man and woman whose love becomes the subject of the work has the beautiful virgin boldly hand Hysminias a cup of wine and then resist his pull once his hands find themselves holding it. Thus she forces a dialogue with the man who will become her lover

by displaying a boldness that infuriates her mother.⁸ Literary flights of fancy notwithstanding, it is rather likely that Attaleiates' marriage to his first wife Sophia resulted from a series of rather more pragmatic calculations. Both the young lawyer and the bride's parents surely carefully weighed the pros and cons of such a union, while beauty, romance, and tense encounters likely took second place behind economic and social considerations. In this rather less romantic story line Sophia emerges as a figure of middling origins, descended from a less than notable family. She was likely a social peer of Attaleiates, whose ambitions notwithstanding, was barely setting out on his promising professional journey.

To Sophia's parents it would have been evident that as a young lawyer Attaleiates could aspire to a successful career at the courts and eventually to accession in the senate. They furthermore surely understood that early on he could not be expected to bring much to the household he constituted with his young bride. Here their contribution truly mattered. Sophia was by no means a rich lady but did nevertheless have some property to her name that made her an attractive proposition for Michael. She therefore contributed real estate, while he brought to the union prospects of rank, court career, and salary. It is a sad biographer he who must jump from bridal contract to funeral stipulations and wills, yet this is the best one can do in the case of Attaleiates' first wife. After several years of married life, Sophia died leaving her husband a small house. The rest of her holdings he liquidated in order to fulfill her wish, which called for the proceeds from the sale of her assets to be granted to the poor.

Here then we encounter a central principle of Roman law still very much alive in Romania: A woman's dowry remained hers even in marriage. The husband could administer and invest it but in the end it was hers alone to dispose as she wished for as long as she did not have children to pass it on to. Since an heir had not been added to Attaleiates and Sophia's household, the latter was free to draft a will in which her fortune was disposed according to her wishes. While Sophia's bequest was therefore by no means bountiful, an estate remained in Attaleiates' possession along with her house as a tangible fruit of their union. This was land he had purchased from his mother-in-law, while Sophia was still with him.⁹ This in-family transaction suggests that relatively early in his career the judge had raised the cash required for such an investment. The *Diataxis* lists this land next to four other estates that Attaleiates purchased over the course of his career. It figures here as memory from earlier long-gone days.

As we saw, the union to Sophia did not last long and brought Attaleiates no heirs. Words written by Michael Psellos on behalf of a grieving husband for his deceased wife's tombstone suggest that the Romans of the Middle Ages were not always stoic when it came to the loss of their loved ones:

O, how you burn me in furnaces of pain
 O, how you drench me in streams of tears
 In every season, day and night
 When in my mind and thought I bring
 Your virtues and myriad graces
 I am spurred immediately to tears.¹⁰

There are, alas, no traces of Attaleiates' own mourning and no evidence of his love for Sophia, if love indeed had bound them together. Like Psellos, he chose not to make the relationship with his wife and his personal loss a matter of public disclosure. Any feelings he harbored for her remained in the confines of the household and only emerge from the *Diataxis* as sums of money dedicated to the commemoration of her life in a number of churches around Raideustos and Constantinople.

After Sophia's death, Attaleiates remained a widower for a number of years in the middle of the century. His son Theodore was born to Eirene, his second wife, in the mid- to the late 1050s. True to form, Attaleiates offers little to allow the modern reader a more intimate peek into his life as a father. If Psellos' writings can, however, be taken as signposts for an exploration of Byzantine fatherhood we would expect Attaleiates to

not stay away from the ... children, neither when they were being bathed nor when they were being swathed, [for] this was the most pleasing spectacle, the infant gently lying on the left arm of the wet nurse and held by the other arm, now with the face down, now supine.¹¹

Alas, Theodore survives as but a series of dry entries in the *Diataxis*. We learn from those, however, that at the time when the monastic charter was compiled in the middle of the century's eighth decade Theodore bore the title of *mystographos* and served as imperial notary. This scant bit of evidence suggests that Attaleiates' service as judge and senator under successive emperors secured for his son a respectable position in

the senate, the state administration, and in the court hierarchy. His hard work placed Theodore at a better starting point both socially and professionally than the one he had himself enjoyed as a newly arrived provincial youth in the Queen of Cities. Late in his life, Attaleiates still viewed himself as a *xenos* (an outsider) who had to struggle to break into the capital's social scene. To his great relief the same would not be true of his son.

To gain insight into the social milieu of Theodore's mother, Eirene, we should note that her relatives, the *protospatharisai* Euphrosyne and Anastaso, bore the same title that was awarded in the eleventh century to young judges at the beginning of their career. While Euphrosyne and Anastaso could never have joined the ranks of the empire's male-dominated officialdom and public sphere, the honorifics before their names suggest that someone, likely their husbands, had either purchased the titles in question or probably received them upon promotion to office in the bureaucracy. Attaleiates' sister-in-law and one of Eirene's aunts were therefore associated, like him, with circles of the lower court aristocracy, Romania's up and coming *noblesse de robe*. It appears then that in courting Eirene Michael sought his partner well within his own social milieu of middling government officials.

Titulature aside, details in the *Diataxis* regarding Eirene's estate suggest that her union to Michael was a contract that imposed long-lasting binding social and economic obligations on the participants. Family was surely about care, protection, and ultimately reproduction but this marital arrangement also produced expectations for the dutiful disbursement of promised monetary outlays. We therefore read in the *Diataxis* that Attaleiates dedicated to his charitable foundation at Raidestos a house within the walls of that city, that once belonged to his second wife's aunt, the *protospatharisa* Euphrosyne.¹² When Euphrosyne retired in a convent, Attaleiates helped her transition to the life angelic by committing to buy the home she was leaving behind her for the four walls of a monastic cell. Taking advantage of the trust engendered by familial bonds he arranged to pay for the property at a moment in the future when the funds necessary for such a transaction would become available to him.

The house itself was uninhabitable. Time and the destructive effects of the catastrophic earthquake of 1063 had left visible scars on it, and it appears that Attaleiates was compelled to buy damaged goods, given his written, legally binding commitment to do so. The judge cannot,

nevertheless, be spared the suspicion of acting out of self-interest. Sometime after her renunciation of the world Euphrosyne bequeathed her estate of Lips or Baboulou to either Attaleiates or his wife. Evidently, by committing to purchase Euphrosyne's quasi-dilapidated asset and helping her join a convent Attaleiates had also bought her goodwill and the attendant bequest.

The damaged property in Raidestos was restored from its foundations up at great expense. Attaleiates mournfully explains that he invested in it a significant part of what personal savings he had accumulated early in his courtly career.¹³ This account of the judge's fiscal travails in the *Diataxis* is, however, somewhat disingenuous. By the early 1060s, Attaleiates was no longer a new man in Constantinople. He was in fact mid-career. True, his entry in the inner circles of courtly society would have to wait until the later part of the century's eighth decade, yet, by 1063, he had already likely given some fifteen or so years of service to the bar. Over that period, he evidently built up savings with which he was able to invest in real estate when opportunity arose. Moreover, from early on his household was becoming multi-focal as significant revenues flowed in from land his family now possessed in Raidestos. The supervision of the estates and houses in this city brought him to Thrace rather frequently and he gradually developed a network of friends and tenants in the area.

The list of Attaleiates' rental properties as recorded in the *Diataxis* also indicates a broadening of his social milieu. The man who arrived in Constantinople with little more than the desire to obtain an education was by the 1060s at the center of an increasingly complex nexus of economic activities and interests. Participation in the economy had then, and still has today, clear social implications, which we often tend to disregard in the mundane rush to buy our daily bread, pay rent, and get on with our lives. Economic transactions bring people together and force all manner of interaction upon them. This was surely true of Attaleiates who owned a bakery bringing in twenty-four *nomismata* per year, a perfumery rented out for fourteen *nomismata*, as well as property rented by a doctor named Theodoros, who paid five *nomismata* per year. The house of the *protospatharios* Thomas of Nikaia also owned by the judge provided annual revenue of 36 *nomismata*, a not inconsiderable sum.¹⁴ Attaleiates surely visited the perfumer to purchase ointments and creams for his wife, while by having a doctor as tenant he gained easy access to an expert whose skill could be of use in time of need.

The bakery, on the other hand, put him in the sights of the authorities of Constantinople. City ordinances as recorded in the *Book of the Eparch* deputed agents from among the Eparch's staff to inspect ovens and maintain reasonable standards of fire safety in a city accustomed to devastating conflagrations.¹⁵ This bakery was in fact located near Attaleiates' monastic complex in Constantinople, which in turn housed a mule-powered mill.¹⁶ Attaleiates evidently harvested grain from property he possessed in the vicinity of Raideostos and Selymbria, transported it to the capital, and then turned it into flour for the market on the grounds of a monastic mill. This venture was shielded to a degree by personalized imperial grants accumulated over years of presence in palace circles. Imperial protection notwithstanding, Attaleiates' shops, rental properties, and farming enterprises were, like most businesses, nevertheless exposed to both market forces and the exactions of state officials. They were also nodes of intense social interaction among people of diverse socioeconomic status and educational background.

More than a source of considerable agricultural revenues, Raideostos was where the bulk of Attaleiates' philanthropic activities were to be concentrated. His monastery in Constantinople was in fact treated as an add-on to the poorhouse at Raideostos, perhaps marking the Thracian city as Attaleiates' true adoptive hometown. By all accounts Raideostos, much smaller and manageable than Constantinople, represented for Attaleiates a home away from home; a city where he could more easily establish meaningful social relations that mirrored his family's position in Attaleia. Here he also actively built a true patronage network, whose footprint is reflected in his strategic donation of small sums to select local monasteries.

Four religious establishments otherwise unknown to us, St Nikolaos of Phalkon and St Georgios, located outside the town's western gate, the convent of St Prokopios close by, and the monastery of the Very Holy Mother of Daphne received the judge's annual donations. Clerics in each one of those institutions performed a daily *trisagion* on his behalf, while his name was inscribed in the church diptychs. Another three churches also benefited from his calculated generosity. St Ioannes Prodromos at the west gate, the Holy Mother of God *Eleousa*, and the Church of the Archangel all enjoyed similar grants of one gold coin each from Attaleiates' son and heir, Theodoros the *mystographos*. The two saints and the Virgin Mary were all celebrated in feasts for which the Attaleiat

had allocated funds.¹⁷ Thus with modest, yet regular grants, the judge and his family became fixtures of Raideostos' sacred geography.

As true Roman, Attaleiates understood the significance of civic-mindedness. He therefore fortified his reputation among fellow citizens through carefully calculated public displays of piety. This process, which furnished Attaleiates with a valuable network of clients in Raideostos, run parallel to his investments in the local economy. The value of such civic and economic engagement is indirectly attested in his account of the 1077 rebellion of the *generalissimo* Nikephoros Bryennios. The *History* tells us here that in Raideostos news of the rebellion in the empire's European provinces were coupled by concrete action on the part of one of the city's notables in support of Bryennios. The ringleader on this occasion was not one of the usual suspects in Romania's politics. Batatzina, the wife of a prominent military man, now takes center stage and brings Raideostos to Bryennios' side through her initiative and actions. Attaleiates, who was present in the city at the time, notes that, at a moment when Raideostos' population appeared to vacillate between Emperor Michael Doukas and the rebel Nikephoros Bryennios, he received advance information of the people's actual intention to follow Batatzina and join the rebellion. His informant was someone to whom Attaleiates had formerly been benefactor.¹⁸ The *History* therefore reveals a city in upheaval, with secret meetings taking place in the homes of prominent local men and, as the case may be, women. It also shows Attaleiates attending those same meetings and trying to preserve the people's loyalty to the emperor. By the time it became clear that this was impossible, his efforts having marked him as a loyalist, he found himself on the wrong side of the political divide. Informed at home by a friendly local about the brewing conspiracy, Attaleiates was able to organize his flight from the city. Such information and support was what his pious donations were in part supposed to garner.

Further examination of Attaleiates' activities in Raideostos reveals a long-term, systematic plan to acquire and develop property in the city. A case in point was the purchase of a number of estates outside the city walls. This was farmland, which had remained fallow for a number of years and had consequently been appropriated by the state. The treasury, seeking to exploit the full potential of the empire's agricultural capital and wishing to reinscribe unproductive land to the tax registers, offered such land, known to us as *Klasma*, to interested investors. The new owners enjoyed tax-exempt status for a number of years until they restored

the plots in question to full productivity. Attaleiates' new holdings were located outside Raidestos' western gate, where as we have already seen a significant part of his economic and social activity was also concentrated.

Of the properties linked to Attaleiates, the monasteries of St Georgios and Prokopios also located in this part of town were both held in *charistike* either by him or his son. *Charistike* was another state policy, which Attaleiates smartly manipulated in his effort to shore up his personal control over aspects of Raidestos' sacred landscape. The state used *charistike* as an effective, if highly controversial tool for the regulation and upkeep of monastic life. Monasteries in financial dire straits were handed over through a grant of *Charistike* to private custodians who assumed the responsibility for the maintenance of their sacred functions. There was of course a flip side to this at first glance pious arrangement. The private custodian was also granted the right to exploit and develop previously underutilized monastic land and real estate. He could in fact pocket all revenues exceeding what was absolutely necessary for the support of the monastery's religious functions.

In this manner, the authorities exploited the management expertise of Romanía's upper classes and harnessed their resources to the maintenance of derelict religious institutions. As it had frequently been men of wealth who had in the past founded the monasteries in question, the "privatization" of monastic assets implicit in a *charistike* grant was in essence a return of formerly private land to private hands. At the same time, the emperor and the grantee could claim a role in the regeneration of contemplative life in the empire. Furthermore, the emperor deflected accusations that he was complicit in the despoiling of God's properties for the worldly benefit of the Roman elites by insisting on the non-hereditary and thus temporary nature of a grant of *charistike*. Here, however, there was a catch. St Georgios and Prokopios were held in a joint *charistikion* by Attaleiates and his son who thus guaranteed the transfer from one generation to the next of what was by law a non-transferable grant. The careful lawyer proves here an adept manipulator of the law and a shrewd investor.

Attaleiates' other investments reinforce the emerging portrait of an active, risk-taking entrepreneur. The *Diataxis* thus shows him purchasing state or other property that was cheaply available and effecting changes in its uses. Some of the plots he acquired outside the walls of Raidestos did not therefore retain their agricultural character for long. He constructed buildings on what was previously farmland, and eventually

received rents from such investments. As the expansion of the Byzantine and Western European economies in the eleventh century ushered an era of vibrant urban activity, Attaleiates and other members of his class sought to capitalize on the building boom of the times much like North American real estate speculators of the early twenty-first century.

The judge's commitment to Raideostos, its economy, and its people are finally highlighted in an interesting event he chose to recount in the *History*. After the battle of Mantzikert in 1071, Romanía faced an acute fiscal crisis when its eastern frontier collapsed in the midst of civil war and intensified Seljuq raiding. Chronic conditions of chaos in much of Asia Minor undermined Roman authority on the ground and shrunk the empire's tax base just as the army's needs most weighed on the budget. The record of coin finds from the eleventh century reflects this rapidly unfolding fiscal Armageddon. Faced with a dramatic shortage in bullion Michael VII and his advisors responded by diluting the purity of the gold currency in an effort to maintain the circulation of coins in the economy. The market, however, was always alert to even the slightest tampering with the fineness of coins and immediately picked this up. Sensing that there was something wrong with the newly minted *nomismata*, farmers adjusted by expanding already existing practices of barter exchange and sought to make up losses in income by raising the prices of all goods sold on longer distance trade with the capital. By passing the cost of the devaluation on to the urban consumer they forced the populace of the capital into the streets where angry crowds demanded that the emperor do something.

As treasury mandarins came to terms with the limits of popular tolerance for the inflationary cycle they themselves put into motion by minting ever-larger quantities of debased *nomismata* they sought a solution independent of the money supply. They thus imposed a monopoly on essential commodities like grain.¹⁹ A silo was in time erected in the vicinity of Raideostos and likely in many other towns in grain producing areas. Once this was in place farmers were compelled to sell their goods through this state clearinghouse. In this manner, the government could achieve either one of two things. They would either impose price caps that would serve the need for cheap grain in the capital or levy extra duties with which to pay Romanía's armies. To the dismay of authorities in the capital, this high-handed intervention in local affairs stirred disaffection and, worse, hoarding. As grain became scarce, the law, which explicitly prohibited hoarding, proved ineffective and more forceful

measures were imposed.²⁰ Nevertheless, despite the deployment of the full force of the state's coercive apparatus, a hike in prices ensued, which mainly affected Constantinople, the intended beneficiary of the measure.

Attaleiates had more than a few words to say on the issue. In the *History* he attributed the price-hike to the corruption of bureaucrats and their tampering with the free operation of the market.²¹ His account, however, disingenuously eschews any discussion of the central role of local producers like himself in the generation of the shortages. In anticipation of better days and in pursuit of higher prices, his fellow citizens were hoarding grain, the only "currency" they could put their trust into at the time. As the clash between the state's agents and the economic interests of the citizens of Raideustos unfolded, Attaleiates placed himself firmly on the side of the latter. This tale of economic woes certainly showcases Attaleiates' trust in market forces but is also testament to his dedication to neighbors and friends at Raideustos. After years of interaction with the people and the economy of the city, the judge considered himself one of them. As a loyal courtier with direct access to the prime minister, he enjoyed imperial favor and cushy tax-exemptions.²² Such privileges did not, however, extend to landowners and farmers who bore the brunt of the government's exactions. Thus the pain inflicted by the silo's operation on the economic and social life of his adoptive hometown justified in his mind the betrayal of Michael Doukas' regime by the people of Raideustos.²³ Even after some of them sacked his property in the city, Attaleiates cast them a sympathetic eye and excused their behavior.

Attaleiates' agricultural and other operations in Raideustos as well as his engagement in the Constantinopolitan rental and real estate market indicate a readiness to do business with a truly diverse set of economic actors. The full scale of his business deals is evident in the production cycle that he maintained from farm to table. Like a modern entrepreneur he used his connections in the Constantinopolitan administration to get a hold on cheap land, lobbied for tax-exemptions, involved himself in the production of grain on those lands and then had the grain transported to Constantinople only to have it unloaded on privately owned piers, located close to his Constantinopolitan holdings. The grain was finally turned into flour in his own mills only to be sold by a baker who operated out of Attaleiates' own properties. This enterprise was complex, involving interaction with bureaucrats on every level of the administration, free peasant cultivators, tenant farmers, local Raideustos

port-authorities, shipping interests, cart owners, millers, bakers, city inspectors, and consumers in two or more cities. Attaleiates sums up his entrepreneurial spirit in a little note he left in the *Diataxis* for his son: "if he is eager for more [money], let him do good work and strive hard to acquire additional property in good faith, having his own father as an example."²⁴

This judge's economic activity in the capital was clustered around a physical space, otherwise unknown to us, situated in the Psamatheia neighborhood. The *Diataxis* lists a number of buildings that constituted an *oikos*, which Attaleiates turned in the mid-1070s into the Panoiktirmon monastic complex. A defining feature of this household, but also it seems of most medieval Roman *oikoi*, was a courtyard.²⁵ Access to this courtyard was via a gate on the ground floor of one of Attaleiates' houses yet it is unclear from the account of the *Diataxis* if this space was bounded on all sides by Attaleiates' properties, or if there was also another opening to a local street. We are told by Niketas Choniates in the twelfth century that his stately home had a courtyard gate sheltered from traffic so it is possible that Attaleiates' estate also followed the Roman tradition of inward looking *oikoi* that kept the gaze of the outsider out.²⁶

The *Diataxis*' account is surprisingly confusing for a text drafted by a lawyer. It seems to suggest that the Church of St Ioannes Prodromos, a large dining hall (*triklinos*) with a second floor gallery and one or two more residential floors atop it, and a three-story apartment building attached to the *triklinos* via the gallery, all opened onto this courtyard.²⁷ This space, marked in the *Diataxis* as a monastic complex, housed a mix of activities. From the easy sociality of the dining hall and the calm contemplation of the viewing gallery one passed to sleeping quarters, kitchens and storerooms, as well as a library and scriptorium that housed the monastery's seventy odd books. There was also the church itself and the far more pungent mule-powered grain mill room. Work, contemplation, rest, and the dispersing of alms were all activities supported by this suburban *oikos*.

By the mid-1070s, these clustered buildings had become a space of piety and dedication to God but we will do well to remember that they in effect represented the sum total of two or more homes owned by Attaleiates and his wife's relatives, the *protospatharisai* Anastaso and Euphrosyne. Members of the laity from among the city's middle classes had in the past occupied this space. It is conceivable and

in fact more than likely that before dedicating them to the monastery Attaleiates and the extended kin of his wife had all frequented the courtyard, attended church as a family, and dined in the *triklinos*, perhaps to the accompaniment of local musicians performing for the up and coming family from the discreet distance of the second floor gallery. In the early days of the judge's union with Eirene, supper in the presence of her relatives would likely have been attended by their husbands and other titled relatives or friends with careers in the different branches of Romanía's officialdom.

This then had been Attaleiates' home for a number of years. We may therefore imagine him pacing up and down the gallery as he waited in trepidation for the cries of his birthing wife to subside and the newborn son be presented to him. The boy Theodore likely took his first steps in that very courtyard by the Church of the Forerunner.²⁸ By the time this domestic complex was dedicated to the monastery the judge had probably purchased a second abode somewhere in the vicinity, if only to leave a proper home to his son. Still, the repurposed halls and buildings of his pious foundation continued for years to echo with voices familiar to Attaleiates. Now that his family was no longer there, monks recruited from the ranks of the bureaucracy took their place. These were surely former associates and colleagues of the judge from his days in the employ of the courts. We will return to this space of contemplation in Chapter 10 when we discuss the monastery and its place in Attaleiates' world in greater detail.

This admittedly speculative reconstruction of Attaleiates' household nevertheless opens a wide vista on the society of Constantinople in which his *oikos* was situated. By the second half of the eleventh century, the senate in the capital was comprised by as many as 2000 people of varying degrees of wealth and influence.²⁹ More than a thousand households like the one described here therefore dotted the landscape of the Queen of Cities, islands of relative comfort, erudition, and influence in a sea of volatile humanity. Some of those *oikoi*, the more aristocratic ones, constituted veritable urban mansions, served by tens or even hundreds of people. Such was surely the house of Botaneiates, known to us by an international treaty that handed it over to the Genoese in 1192.³⁰ This was a large terraced space accessed through multiple gates guarded by gatehouses and dotted with reception rooms, dining halls, a number of houses, and two richly adorned chapels. In this space, there were also stables, a granary, as well as areas dedicated to aesthetic appreciation and

enjoyment such as fountains, a sumptuous bath, and a kiosk. Other *oikoi* like the complex described in the *Diataxis* were more modest though by no means insignificant. All, however, were nodes of influence, centers of patronage in Europe's largest and richest city.

In discussing Attaleiates' pious foundation, the *Diataxis* records a palindromic movement between the capital and Attaleiates' holdings in Thrace. This back and forth between Constantinople and Raideostos is a reflection of Attaleiates' economic and social position as courtier in the capital and local landowner in the Thracian grain depot. Much as he did in Raideostos Attaleiates tried to link his family with particular sacred *loci* in the capital, some preexisting, and others new, like the pious foundation described above. In his monastic charter, he therefore allocated some rents from his property in Constantinople to the monastery of St. Georgios of Kyparission, which received eighteen gold coins.³¹ Of this sum, eight were paid to the monks of the monastery who would be tending his tomb, while ten were spent on the commemoration of his deceased wives, Sophia and Eirene, and his parents, Eirenikos and Kale. Attaleiates therefore ensured that after his death his family would remain tied to the area of Psamatheia where he had over time built up his Constantinopolitan estate. His tomb would remain in the care of his son Theodoros, who was also to be buried there. As sole heir to the judge's fortune Theodoros the *mystographos* would stand to inherit the loyalty, patronage, and friendship that his father had built over years of active engagement with the communities of both Constantinople and Raideostos.

In the end, Attaleiates defined himself as a Constantinopolitan despite his evident attachment to Raideostos. His provisions for burial in the capital indicated a desire to root his family in the Queen of Cities, close to the court and bureaucracy where he evidently saw a future for his son. This Constantinopolitan bias notwithstanding, we cannot but note the symbiotic relationship between Attaleiates' assets in Constantinople and those in Raideostos. It is evident from the stipulations of the *Diataxis* that the monastery and poorhouse in Constantinople relied for its operations on revenues generated by the family estates in Raideostos. Much as Constantinople and its ruling class consumed the wealth of the empire's far-flung possessions, thus the judge's household in the Queen of Cities fed off his provincial property.

Real estate, however, was but part of the judge's fortune. From clothes to furniture and from books to liturgical objects, Attaleiates'

movable assets can also be at least partially reconstructed from the surviving lists of goods he left the Panoiktirmon monastery. On the other hand, membership in the senate ensured that on an annual basis a number of expensive clothing items of significant value were handed to him as part of his salary. By the 1070s, a decade of presence at court with titles above that of *Patrikios* had significantly enhanced his wardrobe with precious silks of brilliant colors. Next to those items one must add the linen, wool, and silk cloth that his household purchased or perhaps even produced over the years. In Constantinople, Attaleiates had access to one of the richest fabric markets of the Middle Ages. Much as modern north Indian and Pakistani dowries are made up of fabrics and jewelry, in Romania a stock of good quality cloth represented an investment that could be bequeathed to the next generation, or as the case may be to a monastery. With origins in Attaleia, a major emporium with its own vibrant linen market, links to Syria, and a local production of fabrics well known around the empire, Attaleiates undoubtedly appreciated the value of such assets. Fabrics, however, were but part of a larger list of movable valuables owned by the judge. Like imperial gold and silver plate, Attaleiates' liturgical and other household objects, items made of metals of various degrees of purity, were a form of zero-yield fund to be tapped in periods of crisis. While useful information on such holdings comes from the *Diataxis* and its list of monastic goods it is certain that Attaleiates possessed a whole other stock of precious or semi-precious items, which decorated his own home as well as that of his son Theodore.

This personal fortune, both real estate and movable items, was to some extent the product of Attaleiates' marital arrangements. Furthermore, in the course of his career, as the judge rose in the *cur-sus honorum*, he accumulated income that made such investment possible. A rough calculation based on data recorded in the *Diataxis* allows us to estimate Attaleiates' fortune at around a hundred and fifty pounds of gold.³² This, though, does not include revenues from fees likely paid to the judge directly by people who had brought their cases before him before he was promoted to Constantinople's high courts. By the tenth century, presiding over a dispute between wealthy members of society had become a lucrative affair for a judge and his staff. According to legislation by Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos judges could demand a maximum of a hundred *nomismata* as *ektage*, a form of legal fee, for important cases, that likely caught the imagination of local public

opinion. Since most court cases then, as today, involved average people rather than Romanía's Fortune 500 we can assume that the litigated sums were usually smaller. From Justinian's laws, we learn that the judges received four *nomismata* from each one of the litigants for cases involving over a hundred gold coins. Konstantinos VII had limited the extractions to three *nomismata* per pound of gold of disputed property. With seventy-two *nomismata* per pound we can see that the tenth century had witnessed a decrease in the money paid by the public to the judges. This was nevertheless revenue that complimented the state salaries and courtly stipends of the empire's judges. Moreover, it all added up, and cases involving more than a hundred gold coins would not be too rare. If the average infantry soldier's landed possessions were valued at 288 gold coins, a property dispute between two families from that social background could easily involve more than a hundred *nomismata*, bringing the judge in question the yearly salary of a poor Byzantine worker in but a few court sessions. Such revenues would have been available to Attaleiates for a number of years before the mid- to late 1060s when he rose to the Court of the Hippodrome, whose judges were by law prohibited from collecting such fees.³³ With this foray, however, into the world of judges' revenues and movable assets we step outside Attaleiates' household and move with him well into the social world where all this revenue was displayed for the purposes of advancement and further enrichment.

NOTES

1. "Prices and Wages," in *EHB*, p. 842 for calculations based on twelfth-century prices.
2. Christophoros Mytilinaios, *Poems*, pp. 50–51, poem 28.
3. "Prices and Wages," in *EHB*, p. 872.
4. Christophoros Mytilinaios, *Poems*, pp. 282–83, poem 132 on the official who feared mud in the streets.
5. Epigram by Onestus in William R. Paton (trans.), *The Greek Anthology* 1 (London: William Heinemann, 1916), p. 139.
6. Anthony Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2006), p. 126 for the translation.
7. Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters*, p. 72 for the translation.

8. Elizabeth Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels: Agapetus—Theodore Prodromos; Rhodanthe and Dosikles—Eumathios Makrembolites; Hysmine and Hysminias—Constantine Manasses; Aristandros and Kallithea—Niketas Eugenianos, Drosilla and Charikles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), p. 182 for the translation.
9. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 333.
10. Leendert G. Westerink (ed.), *Michaelis Pselli Poemata* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1992), pp. 434–35, poem 64, lines 22–27.
11. Stratis Papaioannou, “Letters Regarding Psellos’ Family,” in Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters*, p. 174.
12. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 335; *History*, p. 455, Bekker 249 on damage from the rebellion.
13. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, pp. 335–36.
14. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 341 for these numbers.
15. Johannes Koder (ed.), *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen in CFHB 33* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1991), pp. 128–30 [Chapters 18.0–18.5], more specifically p. 130, lines 681–85 [Chapter 18.3] on the location of bakeries away from houses and also on general safety regulations.
16. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 336.
17. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, pp. 342–43 on St. Nicholas of Phalkon, the Holy Mother of God Eleousa, and on celebrating the feasts of the Mother of God, St. Michael and St. John the forerunner.
18. Attaleiates, *Historia*, pp. 447–49, Bekker 245.
19. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 366–73, Bekker 201–4.
20. Johannes Koder (ed.), *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen in CFHB 33* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1991), pp. 110, 120, and 134 [Chapters 10.2, 13.4, 20.3] on the hoarding of goods in times of scarcity and on punishments for such behaviour.
21. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 367–69, Bekker 202.
22. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 448–49, Bekker 245–46 on contacts with the Prime Minister.
23. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 453–55, Bekker 249–50 on the rebellion of the Raidestinoi.
24. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 351.
25. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 336.
26. Niketas Choniates’ *History* in Jan. L. van Dieten (ed.), *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1975), p. 587, lines 95–100.
27. Simon P. Ellis, “The Middle Byzantine House and Family: A Reappraisal,” in Leslie Brubaker, Shaun Tougher eds., *Approaches to the Byzantine Family* (London and New York, 2013), pp. 247–73, 260–61.

28. Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters*, p. 172 letter to Ioannes Doukas.
29. Alexander P. Kazhdan and Michael McCormick, "Social Composition of the Byzantine Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), p. 175.
30. Michael Angold, "Inventory of the So-Called Palace of Botaneiates," in *Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. M. Angold (BAR International Series 221) (Oxford, 1984), pp. 254–66.
31. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 341.
32. Paul Lemerle, *Cinq Etudes sur le XIe Byzantin* (Paris, 1977), p. 111.
33. Karl E. Zachariae von Lingenthal (ed.), *Jus Graeco-Romanum: Pars III—Novellae Constitutiones* (Leipzig, 1857), pp. 259–61 novel VII.4 on Konstantinos VII's restrictions of *sportulae*; Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, p. 57.



The Courts of Justice, the Court, and the Courtiers

THE COURTS

“Justice is the stable and perennial will to apply the same law for each and everyone.” This sentence has a rather banal ring in modern ears. Equity before the law is, after all, a core aspiration of contemporary polities, where pluralities of citizens take it for granted. On his part, Attaleiates first encountered this bold pronouncement in the *Basilika*, Leon VI’s late ninth century collection of Roman laws. His exposure to this passage came earlier in life, when, barely an adult, he moved to Constantinople for training in law.¹ What we know about Byzantine education suggests that Attaleiates had already dedicated considerable time memorizing the Homeric epics before he turned his attention to the law. Practices of rote memorization and recitation would therefore have helped him commit to memory page after page of the empire’s main legal corpora. The judge surely knew this text well, and in later years he dedicated an abridged and reordered version of the *Basilika* to Emperor Michael VII Doukas.²

This one line, however, had important intellectual and institutional implications. A medieval student reading *Basilika* 2.1.10, likely experienced cognitive dissonance, for he surely understood that the arbitrary actions of an all-powerful, some argued “divinely appointed emperor,” could not be neatly squared with the law. The privilege and distinctions built into Rome’s social system receded before this statement, which was

in turn reinforced by the stipulation of *Basilika* 7.6.11–12. This one reproduced Justinianic Law (*CJ* 3.1.11) to affirm that judges must interpret laws according to legal tradition, precedent, and their personal sense of justice, never fearing that the emperor might declare their decisions illegal and void. Finally 9.8.1 of the Justinianic code assured Attaleiates that the emperor would not accuse him of treason for alleged decisions against his interests. The judge knew well that in reality the emperor could sweep those stipulations under the rug, but also understood that venerable Roman traditions animated those laws. Such traditions were older than any living emperor or dynasty and, like golden fetters, restrained imperial behavior, moderating an individual ruler's autocratic proclivities. Notwithstanding such tensions between the imperial ideal and the polity's legal tradition, the courts and the imperial court did not exist in open antagonism. In both these venues, Attaleiates would leverage his professional integrity to serve personal interests and, hopefully, those of the polity.

The world of justice, like the gated community that was the imperial court, operated as a closed society with its own rules. Much as court ceremonial regulated the rhythms of life in the palace, laws and tradition defined the parameters within which lawyers and judges operated. Men of law occupied a special place in the polity, acting as mediators between competing members of society. By virtue of their duties, lawyers and those among them who became judges dealt with wide cross-sections of society and sampled public opinion on a daily basis. Like others in the world of justice, Attaleiates understood his role as one of public service. What is more, his writings confirm that work at the courts in time raised him to a prominent spot in the capital's public sphere.

The law, however, was not just a calling, a commitment selflessly to serve the polity. It also held out the promise of a lucrative career at the commanding heights of Roman society. Romanía's judges earned a good living. In the eleventh century, provincial judges, in particular, presided over the empire's administrative provinces, the themes, holding among other things the power of the purse in their areas of jurisdiction. Service as a judge in what to Constantinopolitans often felt like a godforsaken provincial capital was therefore a stepping-stone to a successful official career. It usually ensured a triumphal entry into the social world of the senate in the "Queen of Cities." Inevitably, the temptation for embezzlement of state funds was strong for men operating in such proximity to large flows of state revenue. Since the days of the Republic, provincial governors had used their appointments in the empire's far-flung

territories as opportunities for enrichment. The line between legitimate profiteering and embezzlement of private and state funds had often appeared but faintly traced. This then is what the verses of the poet and judge Christophoros Mytilinaios record about the career and corruption of a fellow judge by the name of Xeros:

A sea of goods, to use the common phrase –
That was how Xeros the judge found Greece;
But he left it, not leaving a single drop behind.³

It is perhaps with cases such as this in mind that Attaleiates explains in the *Diataxis* that in his lifetime he had never held office in the provinces. In emphatic fashion, he lets his readers know he had not been part of the sometimes-corrupt ring of Roman provincial governors. His career was instead built in and around the courts of the empire's capital under the close scrutiny of the emperor and his staff.

In Attaleiates' time, there were a number of high courts in Constantinople, the court of the eparch, that of the *quaistor*, that of the *droungarios*, of the *velum* and the *epi ton kriseon*. Next to those venues, a fifth, the *Phiale* dealt with the marines and crews of the fleet—admittedly a rowdy crowd. A sixth, the *Court of the Hippodrome* took on important high-level state litigation. There were also a number of lower courts, one for each of the capital's 14 regions. Three different categories of people usually staffed these legal arenas. First came the *archontes*, who presided over the court. They were drawn from various offices of the administration, and on occasion the emperor might chose to join them. The *synedroi*, men with legal training, acted as advisors to the *archontes* whose training and experience lay in administrative rather than legal affairs.⁴ Finally, there were the *kritai* (judges), who pronounced the court's judgment, surrounded by a staff of secretaries and scribes, the medieval equivalent of paralegals. These courts were spaces of contestation. Emperor Leon VI, writing in the early tenth century, describes what transpired in them as lively, even rowdy and disorderly activities, unbecoming the modesty of women.⁵ Archived legal cases preserved in the files of the monasteries on Mt Athos expose a world of loud debates where the authority of the judge struggled to tame the rightful indignation of aggrieved individuals and communities. Our evidence suggests that judges could not rely on the inherent authority of their office when facing citizens with a strong sense of their rights in spaces, which medieval Romans treated as venues of debate and contestation.⁶

Work at the courts kept lawyers abreast of trends in the social and economic life of the empire. The courts, in a way, operated as the state's feelers for everything that was new in citizens' lives. The law, solemnized by references to the past, and embodied in the expensively attired judges and their distant patron, the emperor, was applied on a myriad mundane cases that ensured the legal arguments by long-dead jurists would frequently echo in the courts. Yet, every so often a new challenge made its way to the courts; a notice to the judges and, for that matter, to the supreme authority of the state that something different was afoot. No field of life was more fascinating in that respect than the world of the economy. Here Attaleiates and his colleagues faced a quicksand of dynamic relations threatening to confound the best of legal minds. The experience of a jurist, who lived and prospered in Constantinople in the years before Attaleiates' arrival in the capital is indicative of what Attaleiates himself had to face.

Eustathios Romaios was a household name among men involved in the business of justice in the early to mid-eleventh century. Attaleiates would have read Romaios' popular at the time collection of 183 legal briefs on different cases that the noted legal mind had tried. The influence of Romaios' erudition on the legal thinking of his time lingered past his death, as one of his students created a teaching manual aptly titled: *according to some, "Peira," or according to others "teaching" based on the actions of the great Eustathios Rhomaios*. Romaios' career highlights the challenges faced by but also the opportunities open to a person entering the world of justice.

Unlike Attaleiates, Romaios was the scion of a long line of lawyers and judges. He first made his mark during the reign of Basileios II when he impressed the emperor in the course of a trial. On this occasion, the young Eustathios successfully argued against the legal consensus of the presiding judges. The emperor's prime minister the *logothetes* Symeon, the famous Mataphrastes, took note of the performance and soon the title of *protospatharios* marked Eustathios' entry to the imperial court. Romaios' promotion was proof that service in the field of justice was an effective way to attract the emperor's attention. The link between justice and the imperial ideal was such that the empire's rulers and their agents directly engaged themselves in the legal process, or at least feigned an interest in it.⁷ Eustathios eventually rose to the rank of *Patrikios* and, by 1028, most likely in his fifties, was offered a position of assessor (*anagrapheus*), which took him to the provinces for a number of months

in the course of which he helped thematic authorities calculate the tax dues of local communities. In that same year, Eustathios and with him the legal profession in the empire received a momentous status boost. The prefect of the city, the eparch Romanos Argyros, rose to the throne. The empire now had a lawyer emperor. To Attaleiates' parents, casting a loving glance on their son, a legal career would have appeared as good as any at the time. Romanos' rise had a direct impact on Romaios, who now saw a friend from the courts on the throne. By 1030, Eustathios had added the titles of *Anthypatos*, *Patrikios*, *Vestes* and *logothetes tou Dromou* to his other honorifics. He was now frequently in the court, next to the emperor as a close advisor and minister.

Romaios was likely still alive when Attaleiates arrived in Constantinople in the early 1040s. There is a suggestion that he represented an old guard of legal scholars, who clashed with Psellos and opposed the new star jurist Ioannes Xiphilinos, appointed by Emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos to the new position of Guardian of the Laws (*nomophylax*).⁸ In any case, it is clear that the legal and social world joined by Attaleiates was defined by the career and success of this man. Romaios' career is also evidence of deeper trends in Byzantine history that shaped Attaleiates' view of the world and defined his approach to politics on the one hand and the historical study of the empire on the other. In discussing cases that bore his teacher's mark, the author of the *Peira* reveals a legal process less exact and monolithic than we may think. The judges presiding over the courts are shown, discussing, doubting, countering, and even resisting other colleagues and their opinions. Eustathios' moment of glory before the emperor Basileios II, at the end of the tenth century, casts the courts as places of public disputation, where oratory and reasoned argumentation overruled tradition and unworkable precedent. The courts then were microcosms where judges, litigants, and audience took lessons in relativism that were bound to also affect how they all understood the emperor's ostensibly absolute power. Romaios' emphasis on leniency, his readiness to treat individual cases in their peculiar social context, in ways that challenged the law's strict letter, are reflected in Attaleiates' own understanding of the law. Like his predecessor in the Court of the Hippodrome, Attaleiates abhorred the strict, unbending application of the law, with the implicit harsh, not to say inhuman punishment of people who could be reintegrated in society through the deliberate application of leniency. If Romaios could think contextually and seek moderated punishments in cases of adultery,

Attaleiates seems to similarly suggest that a captive Turkish commander who had led a *razia* deep in Roman lands should be allowed to ransom himself rather than be “wastefully” executed.⁹

On another level, the *Peira*, with its emphasis on interpretation and on the judge’s idiosyncratic reading of the laws, exposes a fluid changing world of intellectual speculation in which a member of the legal profession could have a say in the formation of new ideas, social norms, and behaviors.¹⁰ The emperor was law embodied, but in effect it was men like Eustathios and Attaleiates, who ordered society and managed social interactions with their written word. It has been argued that the *Peira* was an ultimately failed attempt to introduce novel ideas in law and justice.¹¹ This attempt is thought to have foundered as a result of the empire’s anachronistic clinging to traditional Roman law. Yet, the closing of the interpretative window never really took place and Attaleiates was in a way a product of the legal frame of mind expressed by the writer of the *Peira* and by his visionary teacher.

Romaïos’ experience was in no way unique. The world of jurisprudence kept evolving after the end of his career and the judges who followed on his footsteps faced ever more complex legal challenges. Attaleiates’ exposure to the world of economic trends and financial deals shows a man acutely aware of the challenges faced by anyone hoping to join the upwardly mobile in this century of opportunity. As a student of Romaïos’ decisions, he was fully familiar with the workings of usury, he understood capital to be a generator of further capital and had a broad sense of the investment options open to men of his social background. His activities, as recorded in the *Diataxis*, indicate that he took advantage of such knowledge and that he did not fear the market. Attaleiates and his colleagues were well prepared to join a world of economic opportunity, where wealth was the combined product of low-risk, imperially sanctioned investments, and new, higher risk enterprises. Lest we forget, his first real estate investment was made on credit, as the young judge leveraged the guaranteed annual revenue that came with his position at the courts to purchase property in Raïdestos.

The structure of the system of justice and the number of different courts in the capital trace for us a plausible professional trajectory for someone who, like Attaleiates, sought a career in law. After the end of his studies, in the course of which he likely interned as secretary at the side of an accomplished judge, he could have sought a position as advisor (*synedros*) to the nonlegally trained members in any one of the

city's courts. He may even have started his career as a notary, a member to a recognized city guild. Hard work, interaction with officials in the imperial administration, and access to influential men of the court would have raised the young man's profile, offering him an opportunity to seek a spot as judge on the city's smaller neighborhood courts, wherefrom he would graduate to the higher tribunals. In this professional milieu, working next to well-placed state officials, it sometimes took but an apt classical allusion, a smart retort, and a quick quip to pique the curiosity of someone powerful and influential. In the mid-1040s, even as Attaleiates was looking for the key to the world of the court, an unnamed courtier had the Constantinopolitan social scene abuzz with his audacious approach of Emperor's mistress, the beautiful Skleraina. During an event in the palace, which afforded Skleraina an opportunity to show herself to assembled dignitaries and assert her place in the courtly order, the man in question uttered before her half a Homeric line about the effect of Helen's beauty on Achaeans and Trojans alike. The young erudite's comment caught Skleraina's attention, engaging her intellect and vanity. With the *Iliad* apparently whirling in her mind, she completed Homer's sentence and perceived its flatering subtext. Presumably she did not forget about the literarily minded courtier who could only hope that streams of courtly favor would flow his way.¹²

While the smile of a lady at the court was a precious commodity, the kind words and references of well-heeled officials serving on one of the city tribunals were equally desirable and by no means impossible to secure. The charming Psellos had started his career as secretary to an influential courtier who became his patron. Having completed his studies in law at a time of prosperity for both the empire and its capital, Attaleiates was well positioned to follow in Psellos' footsteps. From early on in his career, long before he entered the senate, Attaleiates would have been building his connections with members of the governing class. Intellectual prowess demonstrated at court, a shared culture no doubt reflected in his legal briefs and oratory, and direct personal contact prepared Attaleiates for entry into the world of the senate and the court. While professional success came gradually, it took some time for him to actually achieve fame. This only came in 1068 when Michael was already in his mid-forties. At the time he served at the *Court of the Hippodrome* and sat by Empress Eudokia Makremvolitisa, who presided over Romanos Diogenes' treason trial.

What Attaleiates had accomplished by the time he had reached Middle Age was by no means negligible. A colleague recently compared the *Court of the Hippodrome* and that of the *velum* to the US Supreme Court.¹³ In the tenth century, Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos had reinforced the court's reputation for impartiality by making it illegal for its judges to receive the customary legal gifts (*sportulae*) that made up an important part of other judges' incomes.¹⁴ The court's prestige did not, however, completely shield it from the potential impact of money and influence on its composition, imperial anticorruption initiatives notwithstanding. That Psellos openly writes of having procured a seat on the court of the *velum* for his good-for-nothing former son-in-law suggests that at times less than competent judges sat on this August tribunal.¹⁵ And yet, there was prestige attached to serving on these high courts. Its judges were true members of the courtly elite as Eustathios Romaios' career attests.

A judge's exposure to and coddling with the empire's elites created unavoidable tensions between his aspiration for upward social mobility and the laws' requirement for equitable treatment of men and women according to the demands of justice. His relationship with people at the court, people with wealth and resources at their disposal, both social and economic, pulled him toward their side even as the law itself called for the very different, equitable, approach to justice discussed earlier. Michael Psellos wrote numerous letters to judges belonging to his social circle, men connected with him through ties of education and service to the state, with which he attempted to influence their decisions and draw them away from justice to the side of friendship. Reciprocal obligations generated through age-old practices of Roman social networking moderated the impartial nature of justice. Remaining a just judge while maintaining links to important men so instrumental to the advancement of his career was no doubt a challenge for Attaleiates and his peers.¹⁶

Attaleiates' entry into the rarefied world of the imperial court most probably took place some time before his accession to the *Court of the Hippodrome*, during the surprisingly obscure and tumultuous reign of Konstantinos X. We do not, however, have clear record of this moment so we have to wait a few years until the reign of Romanos Diogenes for Michael to receive his first historically attested senatorial title. It is likely that the judge made an impression on the emperor-to-be when as a member of the *Court of the Hippodrome* he tried Romanos for his participation in the conspiracy against Eudokia and her sons. Attaleiates notes in the *History* that the court reluctantly delivered a guilty verdict,

which was only annulled by the empress herself, who soon wedded the arrested conspirator. In any case, Attaleiates' attitude in the course of the trial likely grasped Romanos' attention. When the latter assumed the reins of the state, he entered a deeply divided court. Here he soon realized that the Doukas family feared his power. The prospect of a dynamic martial emperor from outside the Doukas circle stemming the Seljuq invasions and restoring peace in the polity's Asian lands had all the potential to undermine the family's position and privileges. The Doukai would therefore likely prove a powerful force of disruption. By bringing Attaleiates with him in the staff of military judges, Romanos started creating his own circle of trusted advisors. The judge would provide much-needed assistance on campaign and act as a possible ally in court politics. Attaleiates, however, was by no means the only person drawn into Romanos' orbit. Around the same period, his friend Basileios Maleses was transferred from the provinces to the court after serving a number of years as judge in the theme of Hellas. His promotion to the rank of *Logothetes of the Waters*, an otherwise unattested title, likely associated with the maintenance of Constantinople's water supply, brought him to the presence of the emperor and guaranteed his regular interaction with Attaleiates.¹⁷

Maleses was linked to Michael Psellos, who, some argue plausibly, had chosen him as husband for his adoptive daughter. Psellos played an active role in advancing his career, mentoring and advising the younger man during his years as a provincial judge. We know from Psellos' earlier failed attempt to find a partner well worth his daughter's hand that he had a very specific idea of what he was looking for in a son-in-law. Such a man had to be respectful of his daughter, offering his focused affection and dedicated protection. Above all, however, he was to be a worthy intellectual partner for Psellos himself. He had to be open to Psellos' philosophical and other concerns and show an interest in secular knowledge. In short, Psellos sought to groom a younger version of himself as husband to his daughter. Of Maleses, who was likely that same man, we know from his friend Attaleiates that he belonged to Romanos' inner circle.¹⁸ Psellos' correspondence confirms that, imperial connections aside, the man dabbled in poetry.

If Maleses and Attaleiates embodied the type of new man Romanos attracted to his person, our view of Psellos' interaction with him has to this day been skewed by the philosopher's wholesale denunciation of this emperor in the *Chronographia*. In both scholarly work and modern historical novels, Psellos appears as a cunning unscrupulous courtier bent

on undermining the heroic emperor. And yet, there is every indication that we have been fooled by the courtier's rhetoric and posturing. His letters suggest that notwithstanding later attempts to present himself as an enemy of Diogenes and despite his Doukas links, Psellos was in fact rather close to Romanos.¹⁹ Such proximity to the emperor, however, once again brings him closer to Attaleiates. The simple mechanics of court business but also the realities of friendships and family relationships made the interaction between the two men inevitable, perhaps even intimate. If Maleses was indeed Psellos' son-in-law, then such intimacy becomes near certainty.

Attaleiates' relationship with Romanos was built on the campaign trail during this emperor's first year of campaigning. Here the judge was responsible for military justice. These first few months of professional interaction and collaboration proved to the emperor that Attaleiates was a competent man whom he could trust with the serious business of running army justice in times of war. After the first year in the field, before the beginning of the 1069 campaigning season, the emperor called Attaleiates to his presence and announced that he expected him to once again join his staff for the coming season. This is the moment when the state official appeared to be morphing into an essential member of the emperor's inner circle, and yet Attaleiates was not ready for yet another arduous campaign. It appears that in his meeting with the emperor he bulked and most probably proffered some sort of excuse. He was a judge, not a soldier and had a young son who, not so far back, lost his mother. He was no doubt going to be missed at home. Romanos was unrelenting but also unwilling to stretch the limits of loyalty. To coat the pill, he promoted Attaleiates to the rank of *patrikios*. The emperor's decision to thus cement his relationship with the judge had implications beyond the simple reality of pay scale and the attendant commitment to yet another year of campaigning. It increased the judge's status at court and raised his family's position in Constantinople. And yet Romanos' timing was surely infelicitous.

THE FANFARE THAT WAS NOT

A person's induction to the order of the *patrikioi* was more than an administrative decision recorded on palace registers. As a ceremonial moment with civic and political import, this was a rite of passage but also a solemn expression of the imperial will, a public and memorable

instance in the capital's life. While certainly not on a par with coronations, royal or princely weddings, and triumphal processions, the creation of a *patrikios* was a state occasion that punctuated the court's as well as the city's calendar and turned the man endowed with the emperor's trust into a household name in Constantinople. As the case may be, we are fortunate to possess a fascinating medieval text focused precisely on medieval Roman pomp and circumstance. The *Book of Ceremonies* compiled at the order of Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos in the middle of the tenth century offers us a plausible play-by-play account of this important public event. While we must remain cautious in our use of a text that was already a hundred years old by Attaleiates' time, it is still useful as a rough outlines map of Romanía's courtly geographies.

In the days leading up to the creation of a *patrikios* members of the senate received notice of the coming event and were asked to attend clad in appropriate ceremonial garb. Palace servants would have fanned out throughout the streets of the city with the relevant invitations. By the second half of the eleventh century, senators numbered in the thousands, as a solid period of economic development had led to the rise of a whole new category of urban rich.²⁰ New men of means now joined the senate alongside established members of the empire's elite. Most of these men likely received the imperial invitation from the hands of their own servants in their stately homes. Liveried messengers also no doubt visited the heads of the city guilds and reminded them of their obligation to show up. The business community of the city knew well that it was more than the emperor's will that demanded their presence in yet another long ceremony. The honorand himself was an important figure and the heads of the guilds sought to court his good will. In the case of promoted judges, the business community could take no risks by offending a prominent member of the courts. The army commanders and the heads of the guard most likely received the news from their adjutants in barracks located on the palace grounds. Last but not least the *demarchoi*, heads of the city's circus factions, were approached and asked to bring their choir, organs, and other musical instruments at the event.²¹ The hydraulic organs of the demes, predecessors to their western ecclesiastical clones, added bombast to this big moment in the life of a courtier.

This elaborate roll call put to motion a rumor mill and turned the key to hundreds if not thousands of wardrobes and jewelry-cases. No member of the senate, no guest of the emperor could lose face by appearing

less than perfectly attired before his peers. As for the future *patrikios*' marital status, the size of his family and its estate, those would instantly become topics of conversation among the city's people. Some no doubt thought this was more evidence that the empire's social order was being overturned by provincial upstarts and opportunists. Others saw a *patrikios*' promotion as proof that a good man could indeed make it to the inner recesses of the palace and the upper rungs of the social ladder. We must in fact not underestimate the effect that such ceremonial had in reinforcing loyalty not only to the emperor but also the entire Roman order and system of governance.

The careful choreographing of the event, which included people from all walks of life, from the circus-factions representatives and the guilds acting as stand-ins for the urban plebs, to the senators and the clergy, affirmed the place of broad swathes of Constantinopolitan society in the Roman body politic. The ceremony sought to replicate republican ideas of universal consensus while at the same time reflecting the hierarchal nature of Roman society. The honorand would bow before the emperor in a fashion that republican Romans would have found servile, and yet at the same time the newly minted *patrikios* knew that in its constituent elements this event was a not so distant echo of imperial investiture. People, senate, clergy, and the palace were the actors and setting for both.

Ideology and symbolism aside, for the attending representatives of the demes, keenly aware of the new *patrikios*' origins, his promotion was just proof that success was within everyone's reach. Success would have been the buzzword in eleventh-century Constantinople. Throughout this era, men like Attaleiates, Psellos, Maleses, and numerous others had been joining the ranks of Roman officialdom, walking the palace corridors in increasing numbers. Others, less educated than the two historians, used their financial heft to assume positions and social status until recently reserved to soldiers, bureaucrats, and families of old ancestry. The new shipping magnates, whether owners, captains or as the case may be caulkers and operators of arsenals, could now envisage a chance to appear before the emperor and even, why not, sit on the throne. Not every *patrikios* of this new era of social flux understood the historical origins and etymology of his title, and even fewer would have read texts in which Roman patricians of the republican era—an ancient time indeed—had assumed the role of historical protagonists. Attaleiates, however, was keenly aware of his place on the long arc of the empire's history.

If invitations to members of the senate were part of the run-up to the ceremony, the preparation of the palace was also no mean task, albeit one that was practiced often and performed well. According to tradition, the court had to be bedecked as if for Sunday services, such allusions to the day of the Lord casting the coming ceremony in solemn light. The morning of the event the senate was assembled in the space of the covered Hippodrome on the edge of the palace complex, where everyone changed into their formal clothing. Then they moved into the *triklinos* of Justinian whence they proceeded into the adjacent hall where they beheld the emperor sitting on his throne in full ceremonial gear. The serried ranks of senators entered the room one after the other and assumed their customary places before their sovereign. First came the *magistroi*, followed by *patrikioi*, *hypatoi*, *komites*, *kandidatoi* and finally the *apo eparchon* and the *stratelatai*. Once those notables were in place by the side of the pre-positioned members of the circus factions, the emperor invited the introduction of the man of the day. By now, the new *patrikios*' name had been circulated among those in attendance. On this instance, the honorand entered the room and cast his eyes upon the leader of the Roman body politic, his master and patron. Before he could get a good measure of the space, he prostrated himself in the middle of the hall in view of the whole senate.

A few moments later, led by the Master of Ceremonies, the *praipositos*, the honorand stood directly before the emperor for one more act of prostration which this time included a ceremonial kiss on the sovereign's purple shoe. Once back on his feet the newly minted *patrikios* received from the hands of the emperor the "diploma" formally confirming his status. It was now time to turn toward the other *patrikioi* in attendance and receive their congratulations for his induction into their ranks. A final prostration before the throne ensued after which he addressed the emperor directly, publicly thanking him for the honor. Then moving to a palace chapel, the new dignitary lit a candle to God and at the very end of the ceremony was acclaimed by the circus factions in his new rank. Turning to the *demarchoi* of the two major factions, the Greens and the Blues, our *patrikios* would have performed a respectful bow receiving from them commensurate respect.

That was not all, however. The new *patrikios* now entered one of the church buildings in the palace grounds, was blessed by the patriarch, and parted with his prescribed donation of 50 *nomismata* for the Church's coffers. The day came to a close at this stage, as the promoted senator

was escorted by the *silentarios* on horseback and in red ceremonial dress, back to his city home. They dined together on a table set according to precise instructions received from the palace and likely discussed the events of the day. Once the dinner was over and after the guests had left, the *patrikios* was once again alone to contemplate fortune and its blessings.

Modern readers do not necessarily fully appreciate the significance of the events that marked this day in the life of medieval Roman up and comers. What to us appears perhaps as fanfare and colorful folklore, albeit on imperial scale, was in fact an important, if oft repeated, moment of medieval statecraft. In the course of two days, first as word of the coming ceremony traveled around town and then during the day of the ceremony itself, a man with a defined courtly identity was invested with social and political attributes that changed his status at court and position within Constantinopolitan society and the empire as a whole. Attaleiates was not an unknown quantity in 1069 when Romanos decided to honor him. The city and the courtiers already knew him as a celebrity judge from Diogenes' treason trial. The emperor himself had worked with him in the course of 1068 over months of exacting campaigning. Many trades' people and numerous litigants would have encountered him during deliberations on their own court cases and, as already noted, a whole array of intellectuals and courtiers already had ties to and opinions of him from their years together as students and members of the empire's administrative machine.

You could therefore ask yourself what the point was of the ceremony? Its function was complex, yet its purpose clear. Ceremonies were and still are forms of scaled-up communication. An entire city of perhaps quarter to half a million people was put on alert for two days as gossip and information circulated regarding the newest addition to the ranks of the elite. To the thousands of common people, represented in this ceremonial by the *demarchoi* of the circus factions and the heads of the guilds, this was information about a possible new patron. The man many of them saw riding through the city escorted by an impressively liveried imperial agent, was one among thousands of senators, member of a select class of people who had access to the emperor. This was a patron who could offer his clients meaningful protection. To potential enemies that the *patrikios* may have had, the emperor was signaling that this individual was now further out of their reach than he had ever been before.

There was finally another group of people worth discussing, the members of the senate, who had been an integral part of the ceremonial witnessed above. Attaleiates was already one of them, having entered the senate with his first judicial appointment as *krites* and *protospatharios*. Now the honorand moved even closer to the emperor. In the course of the ceremony, a new *patrikios* performed his special relationship with the emperor for everyone to see. He kissed the emperor's feet so he could then look at his eyes as he received his title. He then prostrated himself in order to gain the right to publically address the emperor. To the other *patrikioi* in the room, he was now both a competitor but also a possible partner. Everyone would have known about his familial status and it is not inconceivable that by the end of that day, or certainly soon after, concrete conversations would begin for the betrothal of the *patrikios*' child to the offspring of some other senate member. Homes previously closed to him would suddenly open their doors and new social contacts created. Those would have brought the new *patrikios* in closer contact to rich merchants and tradesmen of the capital who had the resources to buy their way into the patriciate, but also to members of the empire's warrior elite, which traditionally carried the title along its military rank.

Yet fortune conspired so that this brilliant and important ceremony would eschew Attaleiates. When Romanos made him a *patrikios*, Attaleiates was with the emperor on the empire's Asian lands away from Constantinople. The emperor who had been planning a campaign against the Turks suddenly faced the unforeseen rebellion of the Norman *condottiere* Crispin who forced him into early action. Setting out in haste with Attaleiates in tow, he reached Malangeia. Here, in one of the empire's main army muster stations, he asked Attaleiates to join him as he set out for the inner areas of Anatolia in pursuit of the rebel Crispin and eventually the Seljuq raiders. On the campaign trail, however, there was no time for elaborate ceremonies. Pomp and circumstance receded before toil and discipline. Attaleiates who was promoted to the rank of *patrikios* would have to wait for the middle of the following decade for the next opportunity to experience what escaped him in the spring of 1069.

Having missed his chance to participate in this grand palace event, Attaleiates could at least console himself knowing that along with the other *patrikioi* resident in the capital he was now part of an elite network of privilege and influence. One public opportunity had escaped him, yet others would surely be offered in the future. To the people of

Constantinople the *patrikioi* were, after all, an easily recognizable group of fancily dressed men droning about the emperor. On major public events such as chariot races, they joined him in reconstituting for the eyes of the Constantinopolitan populace the order of the imperial court. Before tens of thousands of sports fans the *patrikioi*, Attaleiates among them, would enter the emperor's box in the Hippodrome, and perform public obeisance, thus assuming a most prominent position within the imperial *taxis*.²² An ordered world of clearly defined social classes and carefully allocated privilege took shape before the mass of citizens assembled in the world's largest sporting venue (Fig. 7.1).

All this, however, would have to wait. After receiving Romanos' orders and whatever reward came with them, Attaleiates likely informed his family of his promotion and impending absence. Arrangements had to be made for the proper management of his household in view of yet another year away from Constantinople. We should not, however, imagine Attaleiates as a lonely civilian embarking on this martial adventure.



Fig. 7.1 The Emperor in the *Kathisma*—From the base of the Egyptian Obelisk at the Hippodrome of Constantinople

He was joined on the campaign trail by a number of his fellow courtiers. Basileios Maleses was with the emperor while Psellos also faced pressure to join, pressure he too, like Attaleiates, felt he could not deflect.

It is therefore interesting to observe the parallel fortunes of two men who knew each other, interacted in the same social settings, and shared friends, ideas, and intellectual interests. Their relationship is emblematic of the ways in which the court shaped but also changed friendships. When in 1069, Attaleiates and Psellos along with their common friend Basileios Maleses and numerous other courtiers found themselves quartered in neighboring tents in Romanos' army camps, they likely all assumed roles of imperial advisors. Both Attaleiates and Maleses had recently enjoyed promotions, while Psellos was still a member of Romanos' inner circle. The army life of court officials is examined below, in Chapter 8, where we take a closer look at Attaleiates' experience as a campaigning judge. For now we turn to the society of warriors, which defended the Roman polity and actively participated in its politics in the course of Attaleiates' life.

NOTES

1. *Basilika* 2.1.10.
2. Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, pp. 181–82 on Attaleiates and the *Ponema*.
3. Christophoros Mytilinaios, *Poems*, pp. 36–37, poem 20. Here the poet plays with the meaning of the judge's name; *xeros* = dry/parched.
4. Helen Saradi, "The Byzantine Tribunals: Problems in the Application of Justice and State Policy (9th–12th c.)," *Revue des études byzantines* 53 (1995), p. 171 on the members of the court, 172 on the 14 regions.
5. Leon VI, *Novel 48* in Spyridon Troianos, *Οι Νεαρές: Λέοντος του Σοφού* (Athens: Herodotos, 2007), pp. 174–76.
6. Dimitris Tsougarakis, *Κεκανμένος, Στρατηγικόν* (Athens: Agrostis, 1996), p. 31 for the text and Charlotte Roueché's online translation under *I. On Holding Public Office*.
7. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 36–37, Bekker 21–22 on Monomachos' interest in justice as seen in his creation of new legal offices; pp. 568–81, Bekker 312–18 on Botaneiates' legal initiatives.
8. Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, pp. 150–52 and pp. 162–78 on legal education with a different take on the issue from Wanda Wolska-Conus as developed in "Les écoles de Psellos et de Xiphilin sous Constantin IX Monomaque," *TM* 6 (1976), pp. 223–43; "L'école de droit et renseignement du droit à Byzance au XIe siècle: Xiphilin et Psellos," *TM* 7 (1979), pp. 1–107.

9. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 279, Bekker 153 on the harshly punished soldier; Attaleiates, *History*, p. 233, Bekker 127 on Romanos and the executed Turkish captive; Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, pp. 1–2 on a fascinating case of adultery; Oikonomides, *Abortive Attempt*, pp. 186–88, specifically p. 185 on leniency.
10. Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, pp. 86–96 on the Byzantinization of Roman law.
11. Nicolas Oikonomides, “The ‘Peira’ of Eustathios Rhomaïos: An Abortive Attempt to Innovate in Byzantine Law,” in *Fontes Minores 7*, ed. Dieter Simon (Frankfurt: Löwenklau, 1986), pp. 190–92.
12. Psellos, *Chronographia*, VI. 61 (Renaud, p. 146) on the Skleraina and Homer.
13. Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, p. 70 on the judges of the Hippodrome as Supreme Court judges; Andreas Goutzioukostas, p. 155 on the judges of the hippodrome and velum as μικροί δικασταί below the eparch, quaistor, and drungarios of Vigla.
14. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *Jus Graeco-Romanum*, pp. 259–61 Novel VII. 4 on tenth-century restrictions on *sportulae*; Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, p. 57.
15. Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters*, p. 151 on *hypomnema*.
16. Marc Lauxtermann and Michael Jeffreys (ed.), *The Letters of Psellos: Cultural Networks and Historical Realities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) is an invaluable guide to networks of influence in Byzantium; Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture*, p. 66 on the strains of service as a judge on friendship.
17. Jim Crow, “Ruling the Waters: Managing the Water Supply of Constantinople, AD 330–1204,” *Water History* 4 (2012), pp. 35–55, here p. 52 on the *logothetes ton hydaton*.
18. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 302–30, Bekker 167 and pp. 340–43, Bekker 187–88, pp. 348–51, Bekker 192 on Maleses’ life and career; Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline*, pp. 237–43 for analysis and bibliography.
19. Kenneth Snipes, “A Letter of Michael Psellus to Constantine the Nephew of Michael Cerularios,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 22.1 (Spring 1981), pp. 99–100 for the Greek text p. 101 for the translation.
20. Alexander P. Kazhdan and Michael McCormick, “Social Composition of the Byzantine Court,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), p. 175.
21. Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos, *De Ceremoniis* I, pp. 184, 197 (Chapters 35 and 39) for the organs of the factions.
22. Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos, *De Ceremoniis* 1, pp. 305–8 (Chapter 68) and pp. 365–66 (Chapter 73).



The Army in Society. The Society of the Army

In late August 1071, the judge of the Hippodrome, the *velum*, and the imperial army Michael Attaleiates stood before the encampments of Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes' expeditionary force as rumors of defeat filtered back toward him from the front lines. Undeterred by the prospect of Roman rout Attaleiates tried to convince retreating soldiers who came his way to turn about, stand their ground, and assist the beleaguered imperial vanguard.¹ This image is oddly tragicomic and may also be the figment of post-traumatic imagination. Are we to imagine a bookish judge standing in the middle of a dusty plain—arrows whizzing in the air—trying to single-handedly turn the tide of battle? Much as we would find it difficult to picture a suited lawyer holding an automatic rifle and fighting insurgents in the treacherous streets of Kandahar or Aleppo, we experience cognitive dissonance as we set a figure in colorful *skaramangia* in the midst of a medieval battle. Silk clad officials belong to the Byzantine court; they are not the stuff of battle narratives and martial heroics.

This image of Attaleiates seeking to stem the flow of history's relentless attack on Rome's imperial army was likely less dissonant for the contemporary readers of his *History*. The "fighting" courtier was in fact hardly an isolated oddity in the polity's long history. Over the years, the empire saw its fair share of bureaucrat-led armies while numerous eunuchs from the emperor's chambers were entrusted with the command of soldiers.² On his part, the educated urbanite, well-known legal scholar, plugged-in courtier, and loyal patriot, Michael Attaleiates, was

no civilian slouch. Standing at the pinnacle of the empire's military justice apparatus, he had a number of campaign seasons under his belt. Since Prokopios of Caesarea, who wrote some five centuries earlier recording Justinian's wars of conquest, few historians had witnessed first hand the vicissitudes of the battlefield. Attaleiates was therefore a member of a select group. He was also, along with Prokopios, the bearer of a long tradition of history writing that evokes the well-respected works of Thucydides and Polybios, both men with considerable military experience. In the next chapter, we follow the empire's wars against the Seljuqs as those unfolded before the judge's eyes in the course of Romanos Diogenes' reign. In the pages that follow, we look at the army's presence in society. Attaleiates' own life experience offered him interesting vantage points on the relationship of the empire's army with the polity of the Romans. Furthermore, his career afforded him a unique perspective on the army as a Romanizing agent in a time of ethnic ambiguity and flux.

THE ARMY IN SOCIETY

Byzantine historians followed Greco-Roman historiographical models that placed what to us may appear as outsized emphasis on war, soldiers, and the management of military affairs. Unsurprisingly, then, a modern reader seeking to reconstruct life in the Middle Byzantine Era relies on histories and chronicles that privilege a rather martial view of history. As a consequence, Byzantine society figures in scholarship as unusually militarized. And yet in a polity of roughly ten million souls the presence of the soldiers was hardly ubiquitous or overwhelming. Some hundred thousand men populated the state's military registers, only a fraction of those finding themselves in active campaign duty at any one time. By comparison, Modern Greece with a similar population keeps just about the same amount of people under arms. Most tourists visiting Greece today rarely see a soldier unless they storm the beeches of liminal islands by the frontier with Turkey. During the first thirty or so years of the eleventh century, military successes and the ensuing peace had led to a reorganization of the empire's military establishment. The medieval equivalent of camp closures was accompanied by the repositioning of military units from the core of Asia Minor—whence for years they had participated in an in-depth defense of Byzantine territories—to forward positions on the empire's expanded frontiers. In this new era of peace, the daughter of a farmer in the uplands of Paphlagonia or a shepherd

grazing his flock far from the military highways of the Anatolian plateau could have lived long lives never having seen a soldier or the dust cloud trailing an army on march.

That, however, was not Attaleiates' experience. Born in Attaleia, the capital of the naval theme of the Kibyrraiotai, Michael grew up close to the headquarters of the fleet that patrolled the waters between Cyprus and Asia Minor, extending its operations all the way to Byzantine Syria. The local commander, the *strategos*, would have sported his most impressive military gear while walking the streets of the city on the important feasts of the Orthodox calendar. Next to him, the *droungarios* of the Gulf, vice admiral of the fleet, and the *Katepano* of the Mardaites, commander of a special unit of marines, made up the local military triumvirate. In every celebration, the polished brass of weapons and armor would compete with the glow of the Church's liturgical objects for the attention of the revelers.³ As one gazed at the soldier standing before a fresco depicting a soldier-saint, the links between the defenders of the empire and God's host of holy men were reinforced. The army commander was central to the city's social life underlining the tight embrace between the armed forces of the empire and the civilian population. Unlike the increasingly demilitarized Anatolian plateau, Attaleia evoked a martial view of the medieval Roman polity. In a town that played host to roughly six thousand sailors and marines, few people would not have had a mariner in their extended family. It is therefore likely that Attaleiates' own family included relatives and friends in the navy. As for the sheer physical setting of the city with its impressive walls and well-protected harbor, it spoke of the intimate link between the army and the people; a link reinforced every time the *strategos* demanded *corvée* from the local population for the repair of the walls and the routine maintenance of the local bridge over the Kestros river, used by land troops at the neighboring inland town of Sylaiou.⁴

In a state document declassified in the tenth century at the order of Emperor Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos, we read of fifteen *dromones*, and sixteen *pamphyloi* that sailed from harbors of the Kibyrraiot theme, most of them from Attaleia. These different types of galleys were manned according to this peculiar document by 230, 160, and 130 rowers each. The *dromones* in particular carried seventy marines on top of their complements of sailors. A total of 6760 rowers and soldiers sailed from the harbors of Attaleia and Kos, most from the former.⁵ Earlier, ninth-century evidence refers to seventy Kibyrraiot ships sailing on an

expedition against Muslim-held Crete. Moreover, Attaleia was home to an arsenal, which built the *pamphyloi* and repaired the vessels that needed to be kept in operating order. Thousands of men and their families lived off the empire's navy and the businesses that kept it sailing. Household conversations doubtlessly revolved around local heroes and their deeds of valor against the Saracens. Attaleia had, after all, its own warrior lore, populated by fighting icons created in the centuries of naval action against the neighboring Muslim foe. Basileios Hexamilites in the tenth century defeated a fleet from Tarsos and the heroics of his men earned him a triumph in the Hippodrome.⁶ In 1035, Konstantinos Hayé destroyed an enemy fleet in the Aegean, only to then sail north to deliver 500 captives to the emperor for a triumph in the capital before returning triumphant to his home base in Attaleia. The city even had a local naval martyr, the admiral Theophilos, who died in Baghdad after being captured on the aftermath of a naval engagement.⁷ This was Attaleiates' world at the time of his childhood. It is hardly surprising then that in the course of his professional life he developed a close interest in military affairs, social links in the ranks of the army, and a career linked to the empire's fighting forces.

Attaleiates' hometown experience was adequate preparation for his eventual introduction to the empire's "military industrial complex" in and around Constantinople. Though far from the frontiers, the capital remained the empire's primary fortress. During centuries of Islamic and Slavic attacks, the Queen of Cities became the polity's bulwark and last line of defense all in one. Inscriptions on the walls of Attaleia proudly proclaimed Michael's hometown as the best fortified of the empire's cities.⁸ At the capital, Michael no doubt realized that this was only true if one discounted Constantinople. Its massive walls still represented the pinnacle of military engineering six centuries after their construction by Theodosius II in the twilight of antiquity. The latest in ballistae and catapult technology lined its fortifications, while soldiers better equipped than any he had seen in his hometown manned its defenses. At the same time, the capital offered a fascinating mix of the civilian and military classes. The populace, unarmed under normal circumstances, could become a formidable force of resistance when outfitted with even makeshift weapons and called to the ramparts. Constantinopolitans were a querulous, belligerent lot, ready to confront the imperial guard when shunned by the authorities or rally around their favorite emperor against provincial contenders.⁹ Next to the people of the city, Attaleiates would

have encountered soldiers that made up the imperial campaign army, the *tagmata*, and the imperial guard. To them, one must add the sailors and marines of the imperial fleet that was moored in the Golden Horn harbor of the Neorion. In Constantinople, even time was marked by the rhythms of the guard, while the city's economic life was also intimately associated with war, warriors, and military activity. The Book of the Eparch, a tenth-century text regulating the city's guilds, records the saddle-makers' obligation to outfit, when called upon, those cavalry troops stationed in the vicinity of the capital. The city's shipyards, on the other hand, located outside the city walls on the shore opposite the Blachernai neighborhood, employed hundreds of artisans that served both private shipping and the imperial fleet.¹⁰

Inside the Theodosian walls the *Mese*, Constantinople's central avenue, was a parade ground for victorious emperors and their generals returning from battle. Like the streets of Moscow in the heyday of the Soviet Union, pouring formations of tanks, missiles, and goose-marching soldiers into the Red Square before the scrutinizing gaze of the secretary general of the Communist Party, the *Mese* regularly saw demonstrations of the empire's might. One such triumph, celebrated by Michael IV for his victory over a Balkan rebellion, was likely among Attaleiates' first impressions of the capital.¹¹

Civic celebrations aside, Constantinopolitans also inhabited a symbolic universe in which their lived environment could be seen as a battlefield dotted by different phases of the empire's tumultuous history. According to some the forum of Constantine, the center of civic activity, was built in imitation of a military camp, the two semicircles forming it representing cavalry stables focused on the central point of this large plaza where the column of Constantine stood as a rallying point for the troops.¹² Even the Hippodrome, a center of spectacle and of politically charged interaction between emperor and people, evoked war by affording the polity's rulers a venue wherein to celebrate victory. Here every chariot-eeer's success became an occasion for the symbolic reenactment of imperial military triumph.

In his years of life in the Queen of Cities, Attaleiates had ample opportunity to interact with the soldiers of the imperial guard quartered in the premises of the palace and would have even seen them in action. In 1042, during the reign of Konstantinos Monomachos, he witnessed the stunning appearance of an uninvited squadron of Rus ships on the shores of Constantinople. Thousands of men would have rushed

at a frantic pace through the streets of the capital toward the Neoreion, where the ships of the fleet were quickly prepared for battle. Oars, ropes, and sails were taken out of storage and the sound of hammers and saws was likely drowned by the cries of family members cheering their relatives from the quay. Priests held impromptu liturgies for the blessing of the marines' weapons and the ships' hulls and masts while prayers were addressed to God on the occasion of the fleet's departure.¹³

Once the fleet set out, the Constantinopolitans climbed onto the sea walls and watched from a safe distance their navy in action. Victory ensued and for days after the return of the triumphant marines and crews into the welcoming berths of the Neoreion, heroism was the talk of the city. Attaleiates most certainly heard that Basileios Theodorokanos single-handedly fought dozens of Rus and captured their vessels. The story stayed with him and in the 1070s made it into the *History* at a time when the empire's military fortunes were waning.¹⁴ It also no doubt evoked childhood memories from Attaleia in Michael's mind. He was a child and likely still in town when the victorious Konstantinos Hayé led his fleet back to Attaleia having delivered a crushing blow on a Saracen fleet ravaging the Aegean.

Yet victory over the empire's enemies was not all Attaleiates experienced in his many years as a Constantinopolitan. The rebellion of Leon Tornikios brought a massive army composed of the empire's seasoned European regiments to the vicinity of the capital. The sight of this well-drilled and splendidly equipped military force before the Theodosian walls would have been both awesome and terrifying for the city's inhabitants. Thousands of tents and campfires became foci around which different regiments with their distinctive gear, pennons, and weapons arranged themselves. Horsemen and infantrymen as well as craftsmen working on siege equipment—the medieval equivalent of the army corps of engineers—gave all who watched the rebel forces from the walls of the city, a clear sense of the empire's might, arranged as it was against its own people. The skirmishes that ensued between the native forces of the rebels and the Muslim mercenaries in the emperor's employ would also have fascinated the spectator. How peculiar that God's lieutenant on earth would rely on heathens for his safety. The retreat and eventual defeat of Tornikios confirmed the truism that Constantinople was indeed the empire's greatest asset.

A few years later another rebel's army appeared before the walls of the city. The soldiers of Isaakios Komnenos camped before the capital

having first defeated in Asia Minor the very same European regiments Attaleiates had seen in Constantinople's environs nine years earlier. This time, however, the city received Isaakios, who sailed from the shores of Asia straight to the imperial palace and a warm welcome.¹⁵ Attaleiates' home was just off the main road leading from the Golden Gate to the palace and his family would have had the opportunity to watch, from their vantage point on the southern branch of the *Mese*, the soldiers of the victorious general who entered from the Golden Gate and marched toward the center of the city. The judge himself along with other lawyers and judges was likely in the downtown core of the city if not the palace itself, alongside the empire's officialdom, anticipating the arrival of their new master. Many among them, like the protean Michael Psellos, who now claimed a position very close to the emperor, would have looked forward to promotions and improvements of their position at court.

Before that, however, fortune's new favorite had to be publically acclaimed emperor. At the courtyard of Hagia Sophia, Isaakios stood tall on a raised platform and in plain sight took the crown from the hands of the patriarch placing it on his own head, in a gesture not unlike the one depicted in David's famous painting of Napoleon's coronation.¹⁶ When shortly after his crowning citizens held Isaakios' gold currency in their hands, they saw him on it depicted in military garb, his one hand on the sheath, the other holding his sword up toward the sky. The people now knew: The polity was to be led by military virtue. It was to that sword, after all, that Isaakios owed his place on the throne. A soldier now ruled Constantinople, the empire's largest military encampment. Among circles of intellectuals and courtiers, there was undoubtedly debate. Some among them remembered a speech delivered during the reign of the urbane Konstantinos Monomachos, celebrating the kind nature of peace-loving Romans. In his oration, Ioannes Mauropous had juxtaposed in well-trying fashion the Roman love of peace to the restlessness of the bloodthirsty and warlike barbarians and rebels. In this time of relative peace, the Roman polity could pretend it shunned war, highlighting the merits of diplomacy and deliberation.¹⁷ A decade or so later Isaakios projected a very different image, as troubles brewed on the empire's borders. Psellos and his courtly circle of urbane intellectuals declared themselves in favor of change. Attaleiates too was onboard, looking forward to a day when he would enter the charmed world of the imperial court.

A few years and numerous battlefield reversals after Isaakios' reign, another military man, Romanos Diogenes, rose to the throne. During this

emperor's reign, Attaleiates' life took a decisive martial turn as he joined the emperor on three long campaigns in Asia Minor, Syria, and Armenia. Attaleiates records little about his life as a member of Romanos' staff. What we know about his experience on the campaign trail is piecemeal and fragmentary. He tells his readers, for example, that he rode his own horse on the march and mentions instances when he participated in strategy sessions in the emperor's tent. Little else, however, is known about his months with the emperor's army. Much, however, can be safely inferred and accurately reconstructed. As army judge, he surely employed a staff of scribes to assist him with his court duties and likely traveled with the army's baggage train, where non-combatants were positioned. The nature of his office also dictated that he frequently communicate with the leaders of the foreign army contingents, dealing with them directly or through bilingual pages who acted as mediators. On one occasion, before a crucial battle, he even personally administered loyalty oaths to a contingent of Patzinakoi. The barbarian leader and members of his contingent must have approached the judge in public. In a location visible to the rest of the army, whose concerns about the loyalty of those mercenaries the ceremony was meant to allay, these foreign men performed before him the Patzinak ritual associated to such an oath. The Romans had a long history of accepting and even trusting such heathen oaths, ecclesiastical concerns notwithstanding.¹⁸ In a way, they treated such practices as the spiritual cost of running a foreign policy. Like a witness to a formal contract, Attaleiates oversaw this ceremony, keeping to himself any personal opinions as to the barbarity of Patzinak customs.

Attaleiates' rank and office also determined the material conditions that marked his campaigning experience. For starters, he was surely among the relatively well-quartered members of the army. His tent would have been closely positioned to the imperial one, pitched along the camp's main "avenue," the equivalent of the *via principalis* and the *via praetoria* in the Roman camps of antiquity. This location was determined by the nature of military justice, which was highly visual, involving harsh forms of bodily punishment. Such shows of justice could only take place at the most central place of the camp where the units mustered. There was therefore an interesting parallel in the respective positions of Attaleiates' workspace in both civilian and army life. If the covered Hippodrome and the *velum* were located in close proximity to the imperial palace, his army assizes would similarly abut those of the highest-ranking man in camp, in his case the Emperor Romanos.

Attaleiates' privileged position offered unparalleled opportunities for recording military events. An officer, involved in hour-to-hour micro-managing of the army's moves and battle details was all too often lost in the fog of war. The judge was instead ideally poised for a detached and yet appropriately proximate analysis of events. He no doubt relied on warriors' accounts for the details of a skirmish, yet from his protected vantage point at the camp he was also witness to the battlefield arrayed before him. The advantages of such a position are plainly evident in the *History's* account of Romanos' campaign in Syria late in the summer of 1068. As the army arrived in the vicinity of Hierapolis, the emperor immediately set the Roman military machine to work. The city was assaulted, even as troops busied themselves setting up camp. While his coterie of servants and scribes were setting up his tent and offices, Attaleiates was free to move around the camp and witness events as they unfolded. He would have walked among soldiers digging the moat and hammering stakes into the ground as they built up the palisade that had been a staple of Roman camps from time immemorial. By the side of the moat, he would have seen men walking like farmers sowing the furrows of their land, only rather seeding the ground with caltrops to slow down the advance of enemy infantry and cavalry. Fires were lit for soup kitchens, smiths worked on weaponry, and army chemists carefully mixed the ingredients of Greek fire for the trebuchets. In but a few hours, a peculiar city of men took shape before the besieged town.

At a distance, Attaleiates could see formations of the empire's Armenian regiments approaching and then scaling the walls of Hierapolis. The judge most likely entered that city alongside the emperor soon after its capitulation to supervise the terms of surrender and coordinate with local authorities the dispensation of justice under new conditions of occupation. He likely stayed in Hierapolis when the emperor left in a hurry to relieve his army, now under attack from an enemy relief column that issued out of neighboring Aleppo. Once again, at a distance from the battle, this time in the safe quarters of the captured town, he would have had a perfect vista over this battlefield. After the emperor cleared the field of the enemy forces, Attaleiates returned to the camp where he spent a tense night by the soldiers and his staff of pen pushers. With enemy horsemen galloping outside the encampment, everyone remained tense. Under an autumn sky, the judge could no doubt hear the sounds of the night guard and the discussions of soldiers sitting around campfires, analyzing the events of yet another day on campaign with the emperor of the Romans.¹⁹

We should not imagine Attaleiates as a solitary civilian in a camp full of pumped-up warriors. His friend Basileios Maleses was with him and so were others like Eustratios Choirospaktes, Basileios of the inkstand, and Aristenos *protasekretis*, all members of the imperial chancellery traveling with Romanos. When leading an army in person, the emperor attempted to preserve a semblance of normalcy and keep effectively ruling from his encampments the very same polity he sought to defend on the battlefield. His tent was the headquarters of an army chief but also the mobile court of the polity's leader. In the various accounts of the Roman defeat at Mantzikert, the looting of the imperial tent assumes a prominent position because of the riches that passed in enemy hands when it was captured. The emperor's camp was not just a tactical and strategic necessity prescribed by military manuals. It was a reality of imperial power, itself a technology of government. Within it, the emperor's agents reconstituted a semblance of the order that one expected to find at the imperial court in Constantinople.²⁰

Aspects of the imperial camp's day-to-day operation may be partially followed in Michael Psellos' extensive correspondence. In the course of 1068, when Attaleiates was in Anatolia, Psellos remained in Constantinople away from the emperor. This complicated his attempts to serve his friends by mobilizing connections at court. A series of letters expose the difficulties of maintaining an effective patronage network when at a distance from his associates, friends, and the emperor. During his days in the camp, Attaleiates surely saw letters delivered to his fellow courtiers that bore Psellos' seal. The *protasekretis* Aristenos, the *epi ton deeseon* and Eustratios Choirospaktes, as well as some anonymous *krites* likely serving in Kappadokia all received letters from Psellos regarding a dispute that had arisen between the bishops of Gordiason and Matiane. The geographical parameters of this correspondence are telling. Two church prelates, one located in distant Georgia by the Caucasus and the other in Kappadokia, were at loggerheads regarding some obscure issue we know nothing about. Psellos, who was a friend of the bishop of Gordiason, tried to use his connections at court to effect reconciliation between the two men. Yet mobilizing men and resources from a distance, when some of those people kept changing their location, was far from easy. Eleventh-century Romania was an empire of mule tracks and ancient Roman roads. Psellos therefore entrusted his letters to men who traveled in the general direction of the moving army hoping that they would deliver his correspondence and evoke a response. Often he faced

silence and imagined his friend putting forward all sorts of excuses for not writing, when in fact the realities of campaigning were by no means conducive to active communication.²¹

Psellos' ceaseless efforts to stay in touch with his associates require us to rethink surviving accounts of Seljuq invasions and our assumptions regarding the effects of warfare on local communities. While Attaleiates was right to sense crisis in the increasing inability of the polity to defend its frontiers and stop the incursions of Seljuq flying columns, and while it is undeniable that Romanos was under pressure to produce tangible results on the field and restore the prestige of Byzantine arms, the enemy raids had not completely disrupted life in the provinces at the time, this was to happen in the 1070s. As we saw above, at a time of war, Psellos was still engaged in dealing with problems of peace. The crisis, which brought about the rise of Romanos was real, but the Seljuq threat needs to be reassessed and put in context. In those same lands roamed by Romanos' army in search of the Turkish flying columns, life went on, admittedly with disruptions, yet following patterns of adaptation that in centuries past had seen the polity through the relentless yearly raids of the Caliphate's armies.

What is more, the presence of the imperial army in the provinces promoted the notion that the emperor and his government were more than defenders of the realm. Romanos' mobile court, with Attaleiates and no doubt others as experienced judges in its ranks, brought distant Constantinople's representatives to the people. When mercenaries from the imperial army maltreated members of the local population, they could no longer hide behind the numbers and brawn of their fellow warriors. The emperor's soldiers were subject to Roman justice and the people now enjoyed the emperor's protection. The eleventh century had seen earlier attempts by the government in Constantinople better to serve the people. In the 1040s, Konstantinos Monomachos created the *Office for Judicial Verdicts* as a position entrusted with the supervision of provincial justice. Under Romanos, Monomachos' attempt to bring his administration close to his subjects was taken a step further as the imperial camp, with the traveling branches of the Constantinopolitan *sekreta*, visited the provinces. In his discussion of Nikephoros Botaneiates, an emperor he started serving seven years after Romanos' demise, Attaleiates noted intriguingly that having examined provincial legal records he could find nothing in them that would blot the name of his new patron.²² The statement is obviously rhetorical and encomiastic in

texture but suggests, that in his travels around Anatolia on the side of Romanos Attaleiates performed duties akin to those normally attributed to the head of the *Office for Judicial Verdicts*. He had attended provincial courts, had heard ordinary, even humdrum, cases at a local level, and directly interacted with Roman citizens in Asia Minor. He was *krites tou stratopedou* (judge of the camp) but when the camp housed the emperor's court it was inevitable that his duties would involve more than dereliction of military duty.

The camp's function as a mobile court is confirmed by Attaleiates' accounts of Romanos' recruitment of new soldiers in the ranks of the army during the 1068 campaign season. The Romans did not simply press-gang peasants into the army. They rather attracted them to the military rolls with titles, gifts, and the allure of regular salary. Before Attaleiates published the *History*, Michael Psellos noted in his *Chronographia* that Roman rule was based on titles, dignities, and the capacity to raise taxes.²³ Unlike Medieval European polities in the West, Medieval Romans could rely on effective tax collecting for the support of the army. In the spring of 1068, coin collected from many myriad households around the empire found its way into the empire's war chests, whence it reached the hands of young men eager to serve the fatherland for a price. Romans, however, were not the only warriors serving the empire. Coin and treasure also linked the emperor and his staff to the empire's foreign helpers, the increasingly important mercenaries recruited from beyond the empire's frontiers.²⁴

THE ARMY MAKES YOU ROMAN

In the late 1060s when Attaleiates first served as army judge under Romanos Diogenes, numerous foreigners fought in the ranks of Romanía's armies. Attaleiates' contemporaries did not always welcome their presence. The retired general Kekaumenos, who wrote less than a decade later, in fact explains that while foreigners should be used, they should not be offered positions surpassing those of the Romans. Ironically, Kekaumenos' *Romanitas* was of recent issue.²⁵ Like a hyphenated American, he proudly touted his ancestors' non-Roman origins in his peculiar work on strategy, life, politics, and survival among the Romans. Attaleiates, unlike Kekaumenos, held rather liberal, if at times contradictory, opinions regarding the use of foreign troops. His writing, in fact, indicates that he may well have represented the more openly

integrationist side of a debate regarding the role of newcomers in the army and by extension the Roman body politic.

Our scholarly response to the empire's use of foreign mercenaries has been more or less negative. The twentieth century was marked by total wars during which nations clashed on the world scene and shed blood for the defense of their territories. The armies deployed in those conflicts were made up of citizen recruits in the tradition of the French revolution. In a time of nationalism, the use of mercenaries spoke of corruption, placid patriotism, and lack of dedication to the homeland. Alternatively, mercenaries reminded a war-weary academia of colonial enterprises. Even early in the twenty-first century, the rise of Blackwater's private armies, with their world reach and lucrative Pentagon contracts makes it hard to approach the issue in unbiased fashion. While the twentieth century may indeed be partly responsible for this attitude, we may have to look back to the eighteenth century and Edward Gibbon, a founding father of modern Byzantinism, for the original connection between mercenaries and corruption. A consummate classicist writing at a time when England's mercenary regiments were about to face America's citizen militias, Gibbon saw mercenaries as the beginning of Rome's decline. The virtuous republic collapsed under the weight of its prosperity, when wealthy Romans lost interest in the defense of the realm, relegating the task to a class of professional soldiers. The noble citizen soldier was therefore replaced by the cold-blooded killer that was the mercenary, the idealistic and patriotic defender of the republic by the supporter of despotism.

With these ideas dominant in our historical subconscious Byzantinists have looked at the eleventh century as an era echoing more or less the failures of the late republic. Success corrupted the ascetic warrior ideal of Nikephoros I Phokas and Basileios II. Mercenaries replaced the peasant-warriors of the themes, foreigners, with no connection to the land took over the defenses of the realm from the sturdy patriots, who had braved the Islamic onslaught of the seventh and eighth centuries. This is indeed a comfortable romantic idea, in accordance with modern notions of patriotism and ethnic purity. It is perhaps not surprising that it has little to do with what Romans thought about this issue in the Middle Ages. Attaleiates for one shared none of our assumptions when he thought about the empire's defense. He had no notion of a purely Roman army as military panacea for all of the empire's troubles in the battlefield.

When writing on the empire's relationship with the "Latin" and, to put it more accurately, the Norman mercenaries in its employ, Attaleiates offers a current, up to date commentary on an important aspect of contemporary political, social, and military life. His reflections were no academic musings. They were targeted interventions in a debate, his mark on the empire's public discourse. In the very first pages of his work, Attaleiates raises the question of the relationship between the Roman polity and those on its margins. Writing of the empire's position in Southern Italy, he notes that as a result of the arrogance and insulting behavior of the governor, the *Doux* Michael Dokeianos, the Albans and the Latins, "who inhabit the areas beyond western Rome and had once been our allies and members of our commonwealth, while also sharing the same religion," now became the empire's committed enemies.²⁶ This conception of Byzantine Southern Italy as a commonwealth is perhaps surprising. The Albans and Latins of Attaleiates' narrative are in fact the Normans and the local Latinate populations. The ancient names deployed here by the *History* describe populations existing on the margins of the Roman polity. In this Constantinopolitan's mind, these outsiders were in fact natural members of a Roman commonwealth. They were people whom bad governance pushed away from the natural pull of New Rome. These Latin-speakers, whom we normally associate with a world hostile to Romanía, are treated in the *History* as participants in a larger Roman body politic. Less than twenty years after the so-called schism of 1054 with the accusations of heresy and heathenism that temporarily stained the relationship between the eastern and western Churches, Attaleiates still treated the Latins of Southern Italy as members of a shared political and religious community.

The judge then, who wrote some twenty years before the Crusades, felt that the actions of one imperial agent had undermined the empire's position in Italy. Only as a result of unfortunate management had the Normans—soon to become the empire's nemesis—slowly dismantled Byzantine authority in the west. And yet, Attaleiates was convinced that the Roman polity still shared common ground with the new masters of Southern Italy. His position was not necessarily popular at the time. As people tried to explain the defeat at Mantzikert, the Normans serving under the *condottiere* Rouselios proved a convenient scapegoat. According to some, the Norman warrior's decision to sit out the battle led to the defeat of the Romans. Attaleiates did not accept this line of argument. He did not place the blame on Rouselios, readily recognizing

that the Norman and other contingents from the Latin west proved, more often than not, loyal and effective. When they rebelled, the reasons for their actions could invariably be put down to Roman perfidy and misbehavior.

The first westerner to make his mark in the *History* fought, much like Rouselios had, in the eastern front. In 1054, the year when Keroularios issued his explosive aphorisms of the western Church that mark what in later times came to be known as the “schism” between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the Seljuq sultan Togrul Beg was campaigning in the empire’s Armenian territories, in the vicinity of Mantzikert. The defender of Mantzikert, Basileios Apokapes, had a contingent of Latin mercenaries under his command. Despite their spirited fighting, the defenders of the city faced a tough battle that was made more difficult by an enormous siege engine deployed by Togrul’s Seljuq troops. As heavy projectiles kept crashing on the city walls, a Norman soldier whose name history does not record saved the city by executing a daring operation that set the siege engine ablaze with a Greek-fire hand-grenade. Attaleiates summarized these events by putting words in the Sultan’s mouth and noting that after the destruction of his powerful siege engine the Seljuq leader berated his troops for having looked down on the Romans when they had, in fact, proven brave. In the eyes of the Sultan, but in reality in Attaleiates’ own mind, this westerner was not to be distinguished from the Romans themselves.²⁷

Attaleiates’ frustration with the failure of Roman authorities to properly reward good warriors does not end with Rouselios. A few years prior to Rouselios’ rebellion, another Norman drew the attention of Roman authorities. In the spring of 1069, the emperor took to the campaign trail as news reached him of Crispin’s rebellion. This Norman *condottiere* and his band of warriors had joined the Romans in their struggle against the Seljuq Turks and at the end of 1068 had been sent to winter in Asia Minor. In the cold windy days of Anatolia’s winter, Crispin rebelled, no doubt feeling that the emperor had failed to reward him adequately for his services. Once more, Attaleiates’ reaction to this event exposes his openness to self-critique. The judge could easily have deployed the stereotypical image of the voracious barbarian coveting Roman wealth in the pages of the *History*.²⁸ The notion had, after all, royal pedigree as in the tenth-century Emperor Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos suggested that offering gold to barbarians would only wet their appetites and lead to further onerous demands.²⁹ In the twelfth century, the princess

Anna Komnene noted that her father Alexios dreaded the arrival of the Crusaders because he knew of “their uncontrollable passion, their erratic character and their unpredictability.” He feared that combined with their greed these characteristics would make them unreliable allies.³⁰

But a few years after Attaleiates’ death, in the Komnenian period, the notion of Latin cupidity had already become a prism through which to view the Western world. Yet, Attaleiates set aside such stereotypes and approached Crispin’s rebellion without prejudice. Crispin had only attacked tax collectors and had killed no Romans. No attempt is made in the *History* to contest the idea that the Latin brave was treated dishonorably, an indication perhaps that there was something to the notion that Crispin had been offered less than what he was worth. Attaleiates then notes that the Norman had defeated numerous Romans sent against him including the general Alosianos, ironically a recently naturalized Roman of Bulgarian extraction. The latter chose to attack Crispin’s encampment on Easter Sunday, when such attack was not anticipated. A Thucydidean turn in Attaleiates’ narrative gets the reader to witness Crispin’s victory-haranguer to his troops. Much like the Greek historian’s famous speeches, the words Attaleiates puts in the Norman’s mouth are those he felt were best suited to the circumstances. They are also, perhaps, an expression of the judge’s own opinion on the matter. Crispin’s argument was simple and potent: The Romans attempted to kill fellow Christians on that most holy day and they were now punished for their impiety. Roman failure was doubly perfidious as it involved action against other Christians. As in his earlier account of Dokeianos’ arrogance toward the Albans and the Latins of Southern Italy, Attaleiates emphasized the Normans’ Christian faith, thus foregrounding what they shared with the Romans.

Romanos campaigned in person against Crispin who lowered the standard of rebellion, surrendering to the emperor, and offering him his services. Romanos was in a generous mood and gladly reintegrated a worthy warrior into his army. Attaleiates had every reason to think that this Norman “wild horse” could be harnessed to the imperial chariot and offer his services to the polity. Yet, detractors in the camp from among the German palace guards lobbied effectively against Crispin who was now arrested.³¹ Along these German calumnies, there were others by men who argued that being a “Frank” he could not be trusted—“Franks” known to be faithless by nature. Attaleiates, reports this information, while maintaining a distance from it. He was present at

the camp when Crispin appeared before the emperor seeking pardon. He had himself only recently been promoted to the rank of *patrikios* by Romanos and was for a second year in a row serving as army judge. Given his office and rank, he most likely personally interacted with the Norman warrior. He was also well placed to be apprised of the accusations leveled against Crispin and was equally well informed about the Norman's reputation as an effective defender of Roman lands.

At a later stage, Crispin repaid the emperor for his lack of trust by joining forces loyal to Michael Doukas. He was recalled from his place of exile at Abydos, where he had been confined by Romanos and sided with his enemies after being offered gifts, honors, and a prominent place in the army high command. Crispin, at this stage, proved to be Romanos' undoing successfully calling to his side all those Normans, who earlier on, attracted by Romanos' martial reputation, had joined him with the expectation that he would emerge victorious in the Roman civil war. Attaleiates' account of these events is charged and sentimental. In it, he reserves plenty of venom for Michael VII's administration for their shameful treatment of the heroic emperor. And yet, at the same time, his emphasis on Romanos' earlier maltreatment of Crispin is an indication that to his mind there was a direct link between Roman troubles and their failure to justly manage those Normans seeking service in the empire.

Attaleiates' personal experience of Crispin and his analysis of this Norman's career indicate that there was no such thing as a uniform response to Western entrants in the Roman order. The story of another Norman, however, as recounted in the *History* better reveals Attaleiates' opinions regarding the place of the Normans in Romanía. Rouselios had served next to Robert Guiscard in Southern Italy in the Norman leader's wars against the empire. In the early sixties, however, he traveled east and joined the Romans, fighting along them for years before Romanos' rise to the throne. His heroics in the service of the empire provide a window into the author's views about foreigners. Attaleiates in fact dedicated more space to Rouselios' campaigns against the Turks in the province of the Armeniakon than he did to the exploits of his ostensible hero, Nikephoros Botaneiates. Attaleiates' own relationship with Rouselios likely developed on the campaign trail and the camp where his role as military judge, dealing with disputes arising among soldiers, inevitably brought him into contact with this prominent leader of Romanos' mercenary troops.

Some time around 1074 the Norman who was popular with the population of the Armeniakon province, whom he had been defending against Seljuq raids, broke into open rebellion against the authorities in Constantinople. After two years of devastating warfare, Rouselios was captured by Alexios Komnenos and sent to the capital. Attaleiates noted about what followed that the emperor was bent on punishment. He was unwilling to use the judicial process creatively and seek the barbarian's reintegration into the polity. The judge in fact suggested that two-step process starting with a harsh verdict to be followed by a display of imperial mercy was a tried and tested way to achieve this very goal.³² Attaleiates and no doubt others at court like him thought that Rouselios could have helped the empire hold on to its eastern provinces. That was not to be. Rouselios was not offered this command. Instead, according to the judge's account, he languished in prison and the east was lost.

Attaleiates' approving treatment of Rouselios' career is somewhat baffling, even if we take into account his positive assessment of Norman and South Italian warriors in general. As a perceptive observer of Roman affairs the judge surely knew, as modern readers of the period's history recognize, that Rouselios' long rebellion and insubordination undermined Byzantine control of Asia Minor and facilitated the Seljuq conquest and subsequent settlement of Anatolia. What are we to make then of his positive spin on Rouselios' career? Attaleiates' thinking begins to make sense only when we take his earlier statements about other Latin warriors seriously. If, like him we treat Rouselios not as a foreign scourge of the Romans, but as a defender of their lands—nearly Roman himself—the effects of his actions on the Roman body politic recede as a more important theme emerges. Rouselios, like the Italians facing Dokeianos' arrogance and like Crispin, insulted and maligned by jealous courtiers and palace guards, is a friend of the Romans who faced the tyrannical authority of a corrupt emperor. Attaleiates seems to suggest that while Rouselios' justified rebellion had not helped the empire, the Romans could have avoided much of that trouble without Michael Doukas' incompetent administration.

While one may correctly argue that Rouselios' revolt offered the Seljuqs greater opportunities for expansion in Roman lands, it is also true that Rouselios' rebellion had its roots in the special links he had created with the province of Armeniakon and its people. Rouselios had in fact acted as a defender of the province gaining the respect and support of the local population, who saw in him an effective bulwark against the

Turks. He had settled his forces in a series of forts, highlighting his commitment to a life of military service.³³ His defense of the Romans notwithstanding, Rouselios was certainly a foreigner. Attaleiates describes him as such, and the reference to his ethnic origins makes it clear that he had not yet been assimilated into Roman society. Yet in the eleventh century the empire's reliance on mercenary troops would have made it increasingly difficult to neatly quarantine the state's foreign defenders from society. The citizens of Amaseia, for one, were happy to lend their support to Rouselios for his rebellion against Michael VII. They saw no problem in placing themselves under the protection of a non-Roman warrior. Attaleiates then, much like the Amaseians, judges Rouselios on account of his deeds. He was a brave man who had emerged victorious from many battles. Members of the Roman elite clearly thought that he had the potential to save Anatolia. Could a barbarian, however, offer a solution to the empire's problems?

That would really depend on one's conception of barbarism. The *History* records Attaleiates' readiness to treat foreigners as parts of Romanía's social fabric, at a time when the regime of Michael Doukas pursued a policy of matrimonial alliance with the leader of the Normans of Southern Italy, Robert Guiscard. Attaleiates' reference in the opening page of the *History* to a commonwealth (*isopoliteia*) between the Romans, on the one hand, and the Latins and Albans of southern Italy, on the other, may therefore be a reflection of a generally positive attitude toward westerners at the court in Constantinople. Like Attaleiates, Michael Psellos, who was tasked with some aspects of those negotiations, had in fact penned a work of history in which he provided the framework for a more inclusive identity. Describing Emperor Trajan as a barbarian, Psellos noted that the famed Roman statesman only became Roman through his dedication to the Roman polity and his love of literature.³⁴ The idea of a savior emerging from among the distant members of the Roman commonwealth was apparently not so outlandish. Should we then perhaps seek the preamble to the crusades in this rather liberal take on identity and Romanness?

With an army of Romans and foreigners held together by the fiscal might of the state, the emperor's charisma, and his martial reputation, Romanos ventured into Asia in 1068, in search of elusive and highly destructive Seljuq flying columns. To Attaleiates, the patchwork of nations that was this expeditionary force must have seemed like a reflection of the empire's increasingly colorful ethnic quilt. As he assumed the

tasks that came with his position in the army's justice apparatus, he also appears to have started taking notes on the events to follow. It is those notes that give us a sense of the Roman army's actions during the four years of Romanos' reign. To the army then and its activities in the field, we now turn.

NOTES

1. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 294–95, Bekker 162–63.
2. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 33, Bekker 20 on the eunuch commander, the *sebastophoros* Stephanos Pergamenos, victor over Georgios Maniakes.
3. Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos, *De Ceremoniis* 1, pp. 100–1 (Chapter 17) weapons in church.
4. On Sylaiou see *TIB* 8, pp. 396–401.
5. Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos, *De Ceremoniis* II, pp. 652–53 (Chapter 44) on this campaign.
6. Continuator of Theophanes VI. 29 in Ioannes Bekker (ed.), *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus* (Bonn, 1838), p. 452, line 20 to p. 453, line 19.
7. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (trans.), *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 639.
8. *TIB*, p. 302, note 79.
9. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 39–41, Bekker 23 on civilians manning the walls; *History*, pp. 20–23, Bekker 14 on Constantinopolitans fighting the prefect's troops.
10. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 161, Bekker 88 on time counted on the basis of the change of guard; Helen Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la Mer: La Marine de Guerre, la Politique et Les Institutions Maritimes de Byzance aux VIIe–XVe Siècles* (Paris, 1966), pp. 430–33 on the Constantinopolitan shipyards.
11. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 15, Bekker 10.
12. Gilbert Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire: études sur le recueil des Patria* (Paris: PUF, 1984), p. 85.
13. For such a prayer see Elizabeth Jeffreys' translation as used by John Prior in "Shipping and Seafaring," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 488.
14. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 35–37, Bekker 21.
15. Psellos, *Chronographia*, VII. 42 (Renaud, p. 110).
16. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 108, Bekker 59.
17. Mauropous, *Orations* 182 and 186 in Paul de Lagarde (ed.), *Iohannis Euchaitorum metropolitae Quae in codice vaticano graeco 676 supersunt*

- (Gottingen: Dieterich, 1882), pp. 142–47 and pp. 178–95 on peacemaking and on defeating warlike and war loving rebels.
18. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 289, Bekker 159; Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, pp. 312–3 letter 66 “for what is done by necessity is pardonable by God...”; Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (ed. and trans.), *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentinian Text* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953), p. 65 on pagan oaths.
 19. Attaleiates, *History* 205, Bekker 111 on the lay of the land around Hierapolis.
 20. Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos, *De Ceremoniis* 1, pp. 465–72 on items carried for use in the emperor’s tent.
 21. Marc Lauxtermann and Michael Jeffreys (ed.), *The Letters of Psellos: Cultural Networks and Historical Realities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 238–39 on the relevant correspondence.
 22. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 279, Bekker 153 on a soldier punished for harming the people.
 23. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 191, Bekker 104 gifts for recruitment; Psellos, *Chronographia*, VI. 29 (Renaud, p. 132) on taxes and offices.
 24. John F. Haldon, “L’armée au XIe siècle, quelques questions,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 21.2 (Paris, 2017), pp. 581–92 with the latest review of the army in the eleventh century and a return on the debate regarding the role of mercenaries in it.
 25. For Kekaumenos see Tsougarakis, *Κεκαυμένος, Στρατηγικόν*, p. 251; Charlotte Roueché’s online translation under *VII. Advice to an Emperor* in the fourth paragraph for the text.
 26. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 12–13, Bekker 9.
 27. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 81–83, Bekker 46–47.
 28. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 539, Bekker 280 a relatively rare (for Attaleiates) image of inhumane barbarians.
 29. Gyula Moravcsik (ed.) and R. J. H. Jenkins (trans.), *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: De Administrando Imperio* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), pp. 45–46 for the proem and its account of voracious barbarians.
 30. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 297, lines 5–11, translation in E. R. A. Sweter revised with notes by Peter Frankopan, *Anna Komnene: The Alexiad* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), pp. 274–75.
 31. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 229, Bekker 125.
 32. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 377–79, Bekker 207.
 33. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 363–65, Bekker 199 for Rouselios in the Armeniakon, p. 339, Bekker 186 for Botaneiates.
 34. Psellos, “Historia Syntomos,” in *Michaelis Pselli Historia Syntomos*, ed. and trans. Jan Aerts (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1990), p. 21, lines 25–34.



The Judge on Horseback: The Empire at War

Even though Romanos Diogenes and his father Konstantinos before him built their martial reputation as commanders of the empire's Balkans regiments, their family's roots lay at the very heart of Anatolia in Kappadokia, where they owned extensive lands. War with the Seljuqs was therefore more than patriotic duty for this emperor. His patrimonial estates, clients, and tenants were, in a way, the very same lands and people afflicted by the Turkic raids into Asian Minor. In the spring of 1068, when the recently crowned emperor left the capital for the East he did not venture into a land unknown. His was to be a local hero's homecoming. As he moved South and East, Romanos carried on his shoulders the hopes and expectations of the polity for victory and military success.

War, however, was more than a dance macabre of death, sorrow, hopes, and aspirations; it was the stuff of planning, preparation, and ceaseless toil. The emperor embarked on that task with gusto.¹ When he arrived at the Anatolikon province, Romanos issued orders for the assembly of the empire's troops in preparation for the upcoming campaign. Attaleiates, who was in the camp as a member of the army's legal affairs team, was shocked by the spectacle unfolding before his eyes. Living and working in Constantinople, the judge heard frequent reports of Roman military failures in the years before Romanos' reign, yet he was in no way prepared for a direct encounter with the true scale of the problem. All that a courtier living in the capital could imagine was that timid and ineffective commanders lost battles. The generals in the provinces would

at times complain about the lack of funding for their soldiers, yet those complaints were easy to brush off as army prattle. Generals always complained after all.² Romanía's army, as seen by the officialdom in the capital, was shiny, well armed, and gorgeous on parade. Yet, what the people saw in Constantinople was the palace guard and imperial regiments, not the soldiery of Asia. The realities on the ground were, it appears, disheartening. Attaleiates was stunned to realize that the famed Roman *tagmata*, the same troops that accompanied Isaakios Komnenos to the capital after defeating the army of Emperor Michael VI, those soldiers were now a pale reflection of their older valiant selves. Their pennons were dirty from smoke and grime, while the men under the creaking armor were demoralized and scarred from continuous defeats at the hands of the enemy.³

The judge's disappointment was amplified when those troops paraded next to the seasoned and frequently victorious European regiments, the men who had in the past fought under Romanos' command in the wars against the Patzinakoi. An empire famed for its Asian soldiery was increasingly relying on European recruits and Norman, Scandinavian, and Patzinak mercenaries. And yet, if it was disheartening to contemplate the demise of the empire's eastern armies, that very contrast with the forces of the West offered hope. Romanos, as Attaleiates records, immediately mixed the more experienced Balkan warriors with the demoralized Anatolians, seeking to impart a winner's fighting spirit to the cowed soldiers. The choice of mustering grounds itself for this activity was not accidental. The theme of the Anatolikoi was located north and west of the passes leading to Syria on the Anatolian plateau, just west of Romanos' own lands in Kappadokia and Charsianon. The geomorphology of those provinces, a mix of rolling hills, limestone valleys, and volcanic peaks had for centuries supported a rancher's culture.⁴ This was land that could feed cavalry without unduly burdening the locals and the cities. It was in fact a land of few towns. At the same time, the assembly of large forces dictated that the emperor built a solid logistical network, as horse feed was not the only thing that kept an army moving.

Soon after the first muster, Romanos led his men east to Sebasteia, which he turned into his center of operations. Attaleiates shows keen geographical insight in explaining the situation faced by the Roman forces. The enemy army, we are told, had divided into two, one column moving in from Armenia and another from Syria.⁵ By situating his headquarters in Sebasteia on the valley of the River Halys, Romanos

positioned himself at a nodal point on Anatolia's road system, facilitating moves toward any direction. Attaleiates was likely part of the consultations for these moves. In the *History*, he records at least one occasion when the emperor called upon him to express his opinion and join discussions about strategy among his staff. He was no army man, yet he was an integral part of the general staff.

From Sebasteia then, Romanos could follow the military roads to the east toward Koloneia, Satala, and then by entering the northern branch of the Euphrates move toward Theodosiupolis (Erzerum) and the Araxes river valley. Alternatively, he could move southwards. The road here branched in three different directions, two of those highways being nearly equidistant. One led to Kappadokian Kaisareia, the main assembly post of all Roman armies at the time, while the other led to Melitene in Mesopotamia. A middle road led to Lykandos. In 1068, Romanos left the defense of the northern frontier to his subordinates in order to personally engage the Turkish threat on the Syrian front. Germanikeia was his destination given the Syrian direction of his campaigning but easy contact with forces in Melitene, the large fortified city on the Euphrates remained essential. As things turned out, he was forced to temporarily abandon his original plan and instead deal with the northern threat (Fig. 9.1).



Fig. 9.1 Map of Romanía's Syrian, Mesopotamian, and Armenian frontiers

A highly mobile Turkish flying column dashed toward Neokaisareia and sacked the city carrying away booty and captives.⁶ Attaleiates was with the emperor when the news of the Seljuq advance reached the camp. Among Romanos' supporters, it was clear that the sack of Neokaisareia was a public relations disaster. Here was an emperor asserting the idea that Roman arms could defend the polity and, despite all, Turks still managed to wreak havoc on the empire's cities. Under the circumstances, Romanos needed to rise to the challenge. He thus left the infantry in Sebasteia with the young co-emperor Andronikos Doukas and moved against the enemy with his cavalry alone. Attaleiates must have stayed with Andronikos at the camp, as what followed was not for the faint-hearted. While waiting in that city, he was no doubt able to appreciate the degree to which the men around Andronikos were banking on the emperor's failure. In the *History* when discussing Roman failures, Attaleiates noted that in his years of active service to different emperors and in their courts, he rarely saw decisions taken with patriotic considerations.⁷ His interaction with the circle of pro-Doukas courtiers flanking Andronikos Doukas in Sebasteia would have reinforced this feeling.

Nevertheless, to the disappointment, perhaps, of the Doukas faction, the emperor returned victorious. Attaleiates, who surely sat with Romanos and with the other members of his staff, collected the details and wrote about the cavalry's march through the mountains of Tephrike. The Seljuqs retreating from Neokaisareia were laden with booty and slowed by their captives. They thus stuck to the main military roads, which would have taken them east-southeast on the road to Satala via Nikopolis and then due east toward the northern branch of the Euphrates. To intercept them on their way to the Euphrates, the emperor would have led his troops East/Southeast from Sebasteia through the defiles around Tephrike. Then, he likely moved via Zimara toward Kamacha and Satala in order to flank them much as Attaleiates suggested. Romanos' move was successful, and the Turkish horde had to abandon booty and captives while suffering heavy casualties. The emperor's march, which likely covered more than 200 kilometers in but a few days, relied on speed as well as proper use of the terrain and the restrictions that it imposed on the enemy force. One is tempted to assume that among the troops that followed him there would have been Patzinak horsemen ideally suited for lightning expeditions like this one. Yet there were also Roman troops with him. Romanos sought to revive the skill of

border warfare and mountain pass defense that the Emperor Nikephoros Phokas had warned against losing when he wrote his manual on guerrilla warfare in the tenth century.⁸ When he returned to the camp in Sebasteia, the emperor was likely able to silence his critics.

At Sebasteia, the emperor reunited the army and marched with the infantry at his side and with all the disaffected Doukas partisans toward Germanikeia by way of difficult mountain passes.⁹ The march took place in the month of October, when the weather was already turning crisp in the Anatolian plateau. By moving south, the emperor extended the campaigning period leading the army into the warmer climes of Syria and keeping Attaleiates, the courtiers traveling with him, and all the soldiers away from their families for longer than they had likely anticipated at the onset of the campaign. On his way to Germanikeia, or possibly before his arrival in the city's environs, Romanos detached a part of his army and sent it east toward Melitene. Attaleiates records that the move aimed to reinforce the commander of the city against Turkish forces lurking in its vicinity. It is conceivable that given his intention to move against Hierapolis (Mambij), Romanos wished to guarantee that no substantial enemy force could move against him from the east.

The presence of strong forces in Melitene blocked one of the ancient invasion routes into Anatolia. Such a force could also prove a deterrent for Seljuq relief columns moving on the Amida-Samosata road on the way to Hierapolis. These troops, including a strong contingent of Normans, were placed under the command of a general who did not, ultimately, prove worthy of the emperor's trust and put the whole army in jeopardy.¹⁰ To Attaleiates it was becoming evident from the early stages of the campaign that the emperor had a firm grasp on the strategic problems associated with operations close to and beyond the Roman frontier. The moves of the Turkish flying columns and the Roman precautionary measures highlight the geographical unity of the Euphrates frontier from Syria to Melitene. Attaleiates, however, makes it clear from early on that only under the emperor's leadership could the troops be trusted to properly fulfill their duties on the battlefield. Without him, even strong and seasoned contingents melted away before enemy attacks.¹¹

By the time the army reached Syria, milder autumn temperatures would have made for comfortable soldiering. The judge seems to have used at least some of his "down time" taking careful notes on the army's progress. The performance of the imperial troops outside Hierapolis as

presented in the *History* effectively mirrored the actions of Roman expeditionary forces that invaded Mesopotamia in the course of the tenth century. These were surely heady days. To Attaleiates, Romanos must have seemed like a worthy successor of Nikephoros Phokas and Georgios Maniakes. For the first time in years, the imperial army was in the area in force, bringing war to the enemy. On multiple occasions, the *History* records the destruction of the Anatolia's countryside in the years prior to Romanos' reign. After years of hurt and heartache, the Roman army was at long-last victorious, properly supplied, and moving toward its target with renewed confidence. Attaleiates himself records with satisfaction the devastation of enemy land, the looting of their flocks, the taking of captives, and other forms of booty.

Given the opposition to Romanos at court, the propaganda value of well-marshaled Roman campaigns in Syria and Mesopotamia was immense. As Attaleiates notes in his work, the tenth-century warrior Emperor Nikephoros Phokas captured Antioch, having also campaigned around Melitene and other eastern cities.¹² Nearly a century after these victorious campaigns, Rome was once again showing the flag under Romanos. In fact, contemporary encomiasts arguably drew inspiration from poems and songs written about Nikephoros' famous campaigns. In them, the martial emperor fell upon the enemy like an avenging angel, killing hundreds of thousands of Arabs.¹³ Foremost among the panegyrists of the new conquering emperor, Michael Psellos treated Romanos as a divinely appointed savior of the empire in a number of courtly orations.¹⁴ He had not been present in the campaign of 1068, yet Psellos most likely collected information regarding Romanos' exploits from both the emperor's detractors on the Doukas camp and from supporters like Attaleiates and Maleses.

More than propaganda, however, was involved in Romanos' Syrian campaign. Attaleiates opens his account of operations in the area by mentioning the Turkish raids in the vicinity of Antioch. He understood that anyone seeking to block the invasion routes that led to Syria in general and Antioch in particular had to consider the city of Hierapolis as a target. Its proximity to the Euphrates and to two important crossings over the river (Zeugma 50 miles to the north and Jisr Manbij in the vicinity) turned it into the central node for any Roman strategy to defend Syria. Furthermore, its conquest put effective pressure on Aleppo potentially leading to its re-incorporation into a Roman sphere of

influence in the model of the protectorate established early in the eleventh century by Basileios II.¹⁵

The three-day march of the army from the vicinity of Aleppo to Hierapolis was orderly and largely uneventful. The troops advanced under constant surveillance and sporadic attack by enemy light cavalry. From his position in the baggage train, along with the other civilians Attaleiates was only able to see the dust clouds raised by the skirmishes of the Roman scouts with the Turkish attackers. When the army reached Hierapolis, it struck camp while select units of Armenian infantry instantly went about attacking the city.¹⁶ Soon the city fell, furnishing the Romans with victuals and secure lodgings. The captured and refortified Hierapolis remained under imperial control for years after the disaster at Mantzikert, a tribute to Romanos' solid work in the area. Attaleiates may have in fact left his imprint here, helping to lay down the roots of Roman justice in this newly conquered Syrian town.¹⁷

The campaign as described by the judge, who no doubt shared his accounts with fellow courtiers, allowed his Constantinopolitan audience, but also those provincials who benefited directly from the reassertion of imperial authority in Syria, to draw important conclusions about the performance of the Roman forces. Early on, when he first reached the army's muster station in Anatolia, Attaleiates had been shocked to witness the sorry state of the empire's Asian regiments. In but a few months with the army, by the side of the emperor, he witnessed the gradual transformation of shy, demoralized soldiers into confident warriors. Day by day, skirmish after skirmish, and battle upon battle, the army became a more cohesive and effective fighting force. This was plain for everyone to see in the orderly Roman retreat at the end of the campaign, when the emperor led the Romans through the lands of the emir of Aleppo.¹⁸

The 1068 Syrian campaign brought Attaleiates tantalizingly close to Antioch. After it was reintegrated in the empire during the reign of Nikephoros Phokas, the famous metropolis provided a strong base for operations in Palestine and Mesopotamia. Later in the tenth and early in the eleventh century, when Basileios II imposed tribute on the Emirate of Aleppo, Antioch became the empire's gate to the orient and the lands of the Caliphate. If Attaleiates had hoped to spend some time in this fascinating, ethnically and denominationally diverse urban center, he was never, as far as we know, given the opportunity. Fearing that his army would exacerbate the city's food supply problems at a time when enemy activity in Syria was already making the provisioning

of Antioch a challenging task, Romanos bypassed it. The decision was sound. Some ten to fifteenth thousand soldiers, perhaps more, numerous hungry beasts of burden, and thousands of warhorses constituted a veritable and voracious city on the move. Recognizing the logistical challenges facing him, Romanos directed his “fighting city” toward the port of Alexandretta, thus linking his troops to supplies from Kilikia.¹⁹ Here, once again, after years of life in Constantinople, the judge was on the waters of the Mediterranean. Looking at the horizon he felt, perhaps, a little homesick.

From Alexandretta, Romanos led the army through Mopsuestia, Adana, and Tarsos moving north through the Gates of Kilikia into Anatolia’s wintry core. For Attaleiates, this crossing on the way to Podandos was a harrowing personal experience. As soldiers lined sometimes in single file through the narrow passes, they faced ravines and steep drops into what looked like a craggy abyss. Among them, following on his horse Attaleiates carefully negotiated this daunting territory, eyes no doubt on the precipice and nerves fully tensed. His horse afflicted by what he diagnosed as intestinal disease and too weak to support its rider was as dizzy as the judge himself. In the course of the army’s slow progression through the mountain passes, the horse suddenly leaned leftward pushing its rider off its back on the safe side of the pass only to then collapse to the right diving deep into the ravine. At this precise moment, Attaleiates became a spectacle. Used to his role as the fancily dressed state official and aware of the scrutinizing eye of his fellow courtiers, he immediately knew that he instantly became the star of a story worth repeating.²⁰ He surely sensed that the soldiers and fellow courtiers riding next to him appreciated his handling of the horse, the fact that he managed to land on his feet, the fact that he was still alive. The urbane courtier had gained some army credibility in that one instance. He was no longer the polite civilian, the armchair historian. Like his ancient counterpart, the Greek historian Polybios, he could claim that he had seen battle and had experienced the arduous conditions of the campaign trail. One wonders if Attaleiates was in his mind attempting to outshine Polybios, who had died as a result of a hunting accident, having sustained heavy wounds after falling from his horse. Or was he perhaps playfully mocking Psellos, who had, after all, openly written about his fear of horseback riding?²¹

Equestrian heroics aside, the entry into Anatolia of an army traveling light and living off the land in the month of December was bound to

expose both soldiers as well as the population of the areas they traversed to privations. Romanos had conformed in Syria to Roman ideals of proper royal behavior and had been reluctant to impose the burden of his army on the civilian population, yet in the process soldiers, camp attendants, and beasts of burden suffered from the cold and from the dearth of supplies.²² As the tired warriors disbanded, Attaleiates with his small posse of secretaries and retainers took the military road to the capital alongside the imperial train. By late January, Romanos entered the capital with stories of heroism, success, and, significantly, victory. In the fierce battle for public opinion that marked Romanía's politics, his detractors developed an opposing narrative that spoke of an enemy difficult to pin down and of futile, inconclusive battles. For the moment, however, Romanos and his generals were in a position to court the capital, the courtiers, and the population at large, spreading encouraging news of a newly active Roman army. As for Attaleiates, he was among those building-up Romanos' victories, shooting back at detractors with lively eyewitness accounts of the emperor's campaigning. He no doubt also noted that after the end of the Syrian campaign everyone finally knew that the Romans, led by an active emperor, could successfully engage the enemy. The period of Roman indolence and martial humiliation that began in the days of Emperor Konstantinos X Doukas was finally drawing to a close.

Back in the capital, Attaleiates returned to his family, saw his son, and must have recounted his experiences to the growing young man who would one day succeed him at court. It appears that after this first year of campaigning he had hoped to be left to his own devices. He was not ready to abandon his home, the high courts, and the comfort of urban sociability for yet another year in the field. Furthermore, Easter was approaching, a time when emperors presided over important ceremonies that marked their position at the center of the imperial network of patronage. This was the time when the court was called into the emperor's presence for a daylong event during which the leader of the Roman polity paid out in person the annual salaries of the empire's ruling class. In a ceremony, that stressed the emperor's personal relationship with the members of his administration and the governing class as a whole, Romanos was expected to shed his military attire to don the imperial *chlamys* that conspicuously marked his place at the pinnacle of Roman society.

This, however, was not to pass. As spring came to the capital and the court was gearing up toward this grand ceremony, Attaleiates crossed the Hellespont in order to join the emperor at the palace of Hieria on

the Asian shore. In the five-hundred-year-old building of Justinian's time, Romanos was already planning his next campaign looking forward to another year in the field. Coming to his presence, the judge had no reason to expect that his services would be required on the campaign trail for a second consecutive year. Yet, while he was with the emperor at Hieria, news came of an uprising among the empire's Norman mercenaries. One of their leaders by the name of Crispin rose against Roman authorities in Asia. Romanos' first response was to mobilize five regiments from the empire's Balkan armies wintering at the time in the Anatolikon theme.²³ Their leader, Samuel Alousianos, a grandson of the last king of Bulgaria and Romanos' former brother-in-law, was, however, defeated by the Norman forcing the emperor to personally lead the Romans against the rebel.

As the empire's military machine sprung into action, Attaleiates no doubt felt that it was time for him to return to the capital. It was then, however, that orders came from the emperor for him to remain with the army. The judge was dismayed and likely expressed his feelings to Romanos, who did not, however, relent. Still, the emperor was not going to demand service for nothing. He rewarded Attaleiates for his loyalty, as well as for past and future service, by awarding him the title of *patrikios*. As remarked earlier, this was a bittersweet moment for the judge. He was steadily rising in the ranks, his salary as well as influence at court increasing by the day, and yet he was to miss the opportunity of a formal induction among the ranks of the empire's *patrikioi*.

A few months later, early in the summer of 1069, at a place far removed from the imperial palace, in the southeastern edge of the Anatolian plateau, far from any signs of urban refinement, Attaleiates now a *patrikios* joined the chiefs of staff. In the great imperial tent, at the very center of the army's encampment, members of the emperor's advisory panel were asked their opinions on the army's future course of action. During that meeting, the army officers and next to them the ranking civilians following Romanos in his campaigns—people like Michael Psellos, who admits to having been coerced to follow the emperor in Asia—spoke against the idea of continued operations late into the campaign season. The experience of the previous year when emperor, army, and courtiers had remained in the field deep into the winter months bore heavily on many among those standing before him. After two short months of campaigning, courtiers and army brass were

already looking for an opportunity to leave for their homes in the capital and the empire's western provinces.

Romanos himself had every reason to return to Constantinople despite his commitment to campaigning with the troops against the enemy. Since his marriage to Eudokia, he had spent little time with the empress and was keenly aware that there were people in Queen of Cities—people from the empress' own familial circle—who worked day and night to undermine him. Here then, in the imperial tent, having heard from the high-ranking officers and court officials, the emperor turned to the judges. Attaleiates who was in attendance explains that his colleagues aligned themselves with the general consensus; they wanted to head back home. Among them, only he remained silent. The emperor, who no doubt trusted him and had only recently awarded him the title of *patrikios*, now sought his opinion. Attaleiates' position was delicate. His thoughts were bound to upset some of his fellow courtiers. Here he was, in the minds of many no doubt an upstart, about to go against the consensus reached by the empire's best military and political minds. Romanos felt that the silence was evidence that this courtier had something interesting to say and begged Attaleiates to speak up.

When he did so, Attaleiates no doubt introduced his argument with lengthy disclaimers of courtly meekness.²⁴ He then gave the emperor and his advisors an analysis of the empire's strategic and the army's tactical disposition—analysis, which should in fact have come from the officers attending the meeting. He argued that it was too early in the season for the emperor and the people around him to return to the comfort of their homes in the capital. The words no doubt created a stir. His argument was, however, compelling and was based on careful observation of the army's performance over the two campaigning seasons that he had had the opportunity to closely follow. He therefore convincingly argued that despite the army's successes, the enemy had not been defeated, remaining elusive beyond the empire's frontier, ever ready to strike back. In addition, he noted that while the army's performance was improving, it was only when the emperor was around that the troops fought effectively and delivered the victories so badly needed by the Romans. After two years of campaigns, the judge could point to a number of occasions when the same troops commanded successfully by the emperor had been defeated once placed under one of his subordinates.

Attaleiates' words no doubt hit a raw nerve. Samuel Alousianos, the Romanized Bulgarian aristocrat entrusted but a month or two earlier with the task of defeating Crispin, only to bungle the operation and be captured by his prey, was probably present by Romanos' side as the judge developed his argument. Even as words flowed out of Attaleiates' mouth in the exact language of the trained jurist, memories of recent events were kindled in the minds of those present. Everyone surely remembered that only weeks before this meeting Romanos assumed command of the troops, no longer trusting his subordinates, and led the army from its muster station in Malangeia to Dorylaion, further to the South, in the outer rim of the Anatolian plateau. In this town, Romanos received ambassadors from the rebelled Norman who now sought pardon and reintegration in the Byzantine forces.²⁵

As the army moved past Kaisareia toward the fortified settlement of Larissa, its commanders received information that a larger than usual group of Turkmen had been ravaging the surrounding country. While the troops that Romanos originally sent against them failed to stop their raid, the emperor eventually caught up with the enemy. As he reached an area suitable for an encampment, in the hubbub generated by thousands of men busily preparing the fortified perimeter wherein to rest after a long day, Turkish units were spotted in the neighboring hills. Attaleiates, who had been in Romanos' circle of commanders and camp-grandees noted that the when emperor became aware of commotion in the camp he immediately issued out of his tent leading those units of the army available to him against the enemy.²⁶ In what followed, the judge had a rather limited perspective. Positioned at the middle of the camp along with the rest of the non-combatants, he was well placed to observe the commotion. He may have even seen the emperor rushing out of his tent, girded in armor, on his way to battle. The details of the battle cannot, however, but have been relayed to him after the end of the affair. In the evening after the end of operations, he no doubt sat next to the other high-ranking courtiers and commanders of different units, possibly in the presence of the emperor, listening to the account of the day.

According to the emperor and his fellow warriors, the regiments of the Lykaonians and next to them some of the troops from the Balkans had flanked the Turkish host forcing a retreat, which became more precipitous as the emperor led against them the rest of the army. In the course of the discussions, Attaleiates may have also learned that the Patzinak mercenaries, soldiers brought from the Balkans, where

Romanos had been fighting them for years before he ever became emperor, had played a role in hurrying the enemy during their frantic backpedaling through winding passes. The mood must undoubtedly have been joyous. The army had captured numerous prisoners among whom a high-ranking Turkish commander. In addition to that, evidence that the newly recruited Asian regiments of the Lykaonians had proved their mettle in battle only added to Romanos' reputation as a restorer of Byzantine arms. Yet even in a moment of celebration people could not ignore certain distressing signs. Attaleiates, who had remained in the camp during the emperor's pursuit of the enemy, most likely witnessed the attack on the Roman fort by a hidden column of enemy cavalry that did not engage the emperor. While in and of itself the event would have been troubling for the non-combatants in the camp, the fact that of the Roman troops, only the Norman mercenaries deigned to engage the enemy was even more troublesome.²⁷ Those moments were all too recent for those present in Romanos' tent to have forgotten but a few weeks later.

While Attaleiates was surely more diplomatic in making his argument, the implications of what he argued were clear. The emperor could not expect that after his departure for the capital the army would hold its ground against the Turkmen on its own. By the time his words were uttered, the commanders of the regiments no doubt seethed with anger. Yet, by arguing along these lines Attaleiates was proving to be an able courtier. He was aware of both the dynamics of courtly etiquette and the power of honor. No general, however unhappy with his words, was going to dispute the emperor's unique capacity to lead the troops, without undermining his own position in the empire's situation room. At the same time, none of the courtiers, men like Psellos, seeking to maintain their influence over the emperor, would go against a line of argument which was no doubt pleasing for Romanos. For if Attaleiates understood one thing well, it was that Romanos, despite his longing for more bed-time leisure by the side of the empress, would rather spend his days in the battlefield with his troops. As the poet Manasses put it in the twelfth century, Romanos was no earth-eating worm living in the dark world of the palace.²⁸ He rather wished to be out and about exchanging blows with the empire's enemies.

Attaleiates' exposé offered Romanos the opportunity to override the consensus of advisors, generals, and courtiers. The judge, however, went much further with his analysis. Instead of turning toward the comfort

of the capital, he suggested that they march a few weeks due east, and the area of Chliat in the vicinity of Lake Van. This was Armenian territory, which for years had suffered from enemy raids. In fact, when Attaleiates suggested that the army move east, the important forts of Chliat and Mantzikert were already in Seljuq hands. Thus, with the eyes of the chiefs of staff all fixed on him Attaleiates argued for a bold move into Armenia. Forays into lands, which were at the time under foreign occupation would place the Roman army into formally hostile territory that the soldiers could loot with impunity thus reaping rich rewards. It is clear from his argument that the judge recognized the positive effect of enrichment through war on the troops' morale. For an army, which had been fighting in Roman territory, constrained to respect the locals, whom they were after all supposed to defend, a venture into hostile territory was no doubt welcome development.

Yet, in Attaleiates' eyes, the move east was mostly important for other reasons. The fort of Chliat as well as others in the area controlled passes of great strategic importance. Were Romanos to conquer them, he could block important invasion routes used by Turkmen, and thus justifiably claim that he was indeed improving conditions on the ground. By the time the campaign would be over, the Roman army would have garrisons in the Armenian forts and winter would make further Turkish invasions difficult. Romanos could then return to the capital victorious with the army's moral boosted by continued successes. To the generals present in the emperor's tent, Attaleiates' words must certainly sounded as insolence. Who was this civilian telling them what to do? Romanos, however, was convinced that this was the appropriate course of action and prepared his soldiers for the march due east.

What followed is certainly confusing. The emperor gave the relevant orders for the renewed eastward march, and we have letters by Psellos recording the army's slow progress up and down steep ravines in cold temperatures and harsh conditions.²⁹ Yet eventually Romanos turned the army around abandoning Attaleiates' plan. It may be that it was simply unrealistic. Laying siege on well-fortified enemy positions required meticulous preparation, and while Attaleiates' thinking may have been sound in grand strategic terms, it was likely impossible to implement tactically just yet. Abandoning the march toward Romanopolis, whence a turn toward Chliat was possible, the emperor indicated a change of course. The army was to be divided into two. Romanos entrusted half to a commander by the name of Philaretos and kept the rest under

his command. As he sought cooler climes by the foothills of Mount Moutzouros in the North, the emperor left behind him forces, which he hoped would adequately deal with any Seljuq threat.

To his consternation and in line with Attaleiates' predictions, those units were attacked by the Seljuqs and, fighting without the emperor in their midst, were soundly defeated. Romanos remained in camp for a few days to collect defeated stragglers, treat the wounded, and run a military tribunal that was to apportion blame on the commanders responsible for the defeat. Attaleiates was a member of the court and the *History* records what reads like the crown's opinion in which the judge berates the generals for their lack of foresight, openly stating that they could not be entrusted with any command in the absence of the emperor.³⁰ The air was tense in the camp as Attaleiates walked among the wounded and the dying. It was not his first campaign yet the gruesome reality of war must have been overwhelming. Soldiers lay on their mats with all manner of trauma from swords, javelins, lances, and, more often than not, arrows. While Roman armies were well staffed with medical corpsmen sometimes trained in the treatment of trauma, provisions for wounded soldiers were far from ideal. These men while experienced were not necessarily trained doctors. According to military manuals, a general had to select eight or ten of the less martial soldiers from each *tagma* of 300 for medical duties.³¹ Years of service turned some of those soldiers into competent nurses with experience in the treatment of war-wounds, and yet no man seriously injured could count on being saved. When looking at the twelfth-century charter from the imperial pious foundation of Christ Pantokrator in Constantinople, we are impressed by the emphasis on cleanliness, frequent change of gauzes and bedsheets and the diligent care offered to the sick in this well-funded monastery. In the field, however, Attaleiates and the rest of the army faced a rather different reality. As effectively as the army medical corps may have been organized by medieval standards, conditions here were always going to be challenging. Significantly, the numbers of the wounded would have been daunting as the camp's doctors strove to treat the equivalent of a few overcrowded emergency rooms in the middle of rural Anatolia.

Attaleiates' position at court surely brought him into direct contact with wounded soldiers, who needed someone to act as a witness to their last wishes or help draw up a will, as they contemplated the future of their families without them. Once in his tent after an emotionally draining day among the hundreds of wounded men, the judge could converse

with his fellow bureaucrats about the bloody tableau they had witnessed. It is even conceivable that some of them would have taken part in medical procedures in the course of the campaign. Michael Psellos, who in 1069 joined the emperor on the campaign trail, boasted of his medical knowledge, lectured on diverse medical subjects, and even wrote treatises on medicine.³² Such a man could very easily have been put on the spot in similar conditions, forced to display some of his skills on a soldier's injuries.

Certain as Attaleiates' exposure to gory images of pain and death may have been, we have no actual written evidence on his part that would record the effects of such an experience on him. In writing his history he chose to hover above the minutiae of pain and trauma and rather focus on the larger picture, the one invoking an ancient and mighty empire creaking before the attacks of a determined enemy. Immunized as we are from similar images, by a government's censorship of the reality of war, we cannot but marvel at Attaleiates' capacity to process the violence and devastation of war and portray it in almost pedestrian fashion. Nevertheless, sane as his account may appear, he was no doubt afflicted by everything he saw around him.

At the end of a number of emotionally draining days in camp, deliberations followed, in the course of which the emperor declared his decision to turn toward Mesopotamia, where he felt his presence was required. Less shy this time, Attaleiates raised his voice and addressed Romanos telling him that a campaign toward already ravaged territory was pointless. He instead advocated a return to the empire's heartland, where the emperor could dedicate himself to the defense of towns and villages that had not yet been ravaged. It was not time for him to play doctor to his wounded subjects. He instead needed to ensure the health of those who were still untouched by enemy raids. The city of Ikonion with its rich environs was apparently under threat and the emperor was asked to act.

Romanos accepted the wisdom behind Attaleiates' advice and moved his forces toward Ikonion, not before, however, the Turks sacked that prosperous Anatolian town. What followed was a series of well planned but imperfectly executed attempts at coordinating the Roman forces that were supposed to stop the retreating Seljuq column. Once again, Attaleiates was proven right that the Romans would not perform unless the emperor was with them. As the end of the season approached, the judge followed the army back to the capital after a year of mixed results in the field. The imperial host was increasingly effective when properly

led, the empire, however, was still woefully unprepared for the multi-pronged Seljuq invasions. The troops' performance under Romanos was improving, and yet their ability to independently engage the enemy was still where it had been when Attaleiates first cast his eyes upon the Asian regiments in Romanos' muster roll call.

In Constantinople, Attaleiates reconnected with his family and likely joined the emperor for further consultations. This coming year Romanos was to spend time in the capital strengthening his links with the civilian administration. Yet, behind Romanos' decision to entrust the command of the army to his subordinates lay more than a need to coddle with his wife's family. Ever since he had assumed the throne, two years had lapsed and he had only spent a few months by Eudokia's side. The empress had been his key to power and, feelings aside, he had every reason to spend time with her in the palace and affirm his affection. Furthermore, this was an opportunity to lobby and win over to his side important aristocrats and other powerful officials, while keeping a watchful eye on her relatives and the Doukas clan, still unhappy with their role on the sidelines of courtly politics. Alas, his sabbatical from the toils of war came at a high price to the empire. Romanos' heart was in the battlefields, and the news from Anatolia during his stay in the capital constantly reminded him of his duties. Even sympathetic historians like Attaleiates note that the emperor felt envious of the commanders he left in his shoes. In the palace corridors, there were rumors that Manuel Komnenos who was defeated by the Turks only failed because the emperor halved his forces fearing that the young aristocrat would succeed where he had failed to produce decisive results.³³ Whatever the causes of Manuel's failure, however, Attaleiates' predictions were once more shown to be painfully accurate. With the emperor in the capital, the Turkmen proved deadly effective in their war against Rome.

With the gloom of defeat hanging over the society of courtiers and officials, it was no small surprise that the defeated Manuel Komnenos convinced his Seljuq captor to betray his compatriots and join the Roman emperor in Constantinople. Given the disheartening news of Komnenos' earlier defeat, this event was duly celebrated in the capital. Manuel hosted his barbarian guest at his urban estate, offering him lavish entertainment of a kind the Seljuq may not have encountered before. Romanos bid his time and, after a few days, convened the entire senate early in the morning, at the moment when the sun was rising. The hall selected for this event was the *Chrysotriklinos*, by now more than

four centuries old, a relic of late antiquity that impressed upon the visitor the empire's longevity and venerable roots. The tableau of imperial pomp put on display for the sake of the visiting Seljuq spoke of power and wealth. The walk itself to the *Chrysotriklinos* would have taken him through the labyrinthine palace grounds to the neighboring *Kainourgion* hall with its mosaic depictions of notable Roman victories of centuries past. In the *Chrysotriklinos* itself, a powerful *chiaroscuro* accentuated the glory of the emperor as rays of sun entered through a number of the sixteen windows that studded the room's eight sides, gradually illuminating the hall with their reflections on gold mosaics and multicolored marble revetments. Sat at the room's apse, under an image of Christ enthroned, a hint not too subtle about the emperor's own role on earth, Romanos was dressed in resplendent ceremonial clothing. Before him stood the Roman Senate: the empire's richest men, the ranks of the educated, the influential, and the simply lucky.³⁴

If the staging of the ceremony aimed to awe the Turk with Roman glory and convince him that his fate lay with his new master, the presence of the steppe warrior amidst Constantinopolitan refinement was in itself a message to the Roman viewer. Attaleiates does not fail to remark on the ugly face and small stature of the man who had defeated Manuel Komnenos. His account echoes similar images of barbarians visiting European courts, dazzled by civilization's refined tastes and in turn reaffirming the host audiences' feelings of superiority. On this occasion, the senate witnessed the Turk's submission to Romanos, while being reminded that the aristocratic potential rival to the emperor, Manuel Komnenos, had in fact lost a battle and his army to an ugly, short man. As for Romanos, no doubt still toying with Attaleiates' idea of a campaign into the depths of Armenia, he could show his senate that the enemy was barely human.

And yet, aesthetics and xenophobia notwithstanding, this ceremony was a first stage toward the integration of a foreigner in the imperial *taxis*. If the rebellious Crispin could be inducted in the Roman order, then surely with some goodwill and a timely conversion one would expect to see the Seljuq commander by the side of the emperor, a loyal subject of the eternal Roman state. With high hopes then Romanos embarked on his next task, which was to take him out of the ceremonial robes and the palace and into the soldier's armor and the din of battle. He perhaps recognized that in the meeting of the chiefs of staff that had taken place in Kappadokia the previous summer Attaleiates had proved

strategically astute. The emperor had felt unready to lead the army all the way to Lake Van, yet Attaleiates was right to view Mantzikert and Chliat as spigots that, once switched off, would stem the flow of invasions from the eastern part of the empire. If that part of the frontier were secured, the Romans could then turn to Melitene, one by one blocking the avenues that allowed the enemy to raid the fatherland. Plans had to be made then and resources mustered. Romanos knew, as did Attaleiates, that Mantzikert was a formidable fort. Togrul Beg had mobilized a large expeditionary force with a sizeable siege train containing a giant Trebuchet for his attack on it in 1054, and he had still failed. The Roman army would have to be well supplied with victuals for a long campaign in the east. And this time, Romanos would have to lead a force strong enough to produce decisive results.

The empire was by all accounts facing a crisis, both fiscal and military, and yet the planning for the campaign of 1071 was evidence of the underlining vitality of the economy and society that shouldered the costs of Romanos' campaigning. The emperor and his advisors certainly felt far more confident about the likely outcome of the campaign than Herakleios, a famous Roman of times long past, would have dared feel during the planning stages of his own great eastern wars against the rampant kingdom of Persia. In many ways, Romanos' bustling eleventh-century empire was much stronger, both fiscally and militarily than the declining late-antique state Herakleios led to great victories over the Persians in the seventh century. The Turkoman raiders were surely destructive, and it was clear the Romans were having trouble engaging them effectively, were they, however, an empire-busting threat? Where they as potent as the Persian kingdom that nearly destroyed Rome at the end of antiquity? Romanos had every reason to think not.

With confidence then, Romanos set the empire's administrative and military apparatus in motion. Experienced units from the Balkans were once more ferried over to Asia Minor and with them came Patzinakoi, Normans, Germans, and Italians all to join indigenous Anatolian regiments. Muster areas in Asia Minor were ordered to stock-up with victuals for Romanos' campaign force. Romanos' own estates in Kappadokia were asked to prepare for the reception of the emperor, who would be leading the army through his homeland. Even further to the east in the vicinity of Theodosioupolis, the imperial post would have delivered orders for the collection of supplies adequate for two months campaigning. The whole of Anatolia surely buzzed with activity in the spring of

1071 as resources were methodically stashed along military highways for the army to use. Moreover, as the emperor was expected to reach Theodosiopolis by harvest time, requisition papers were surely delivered to the local authorities for the orderly harvesting and storage of what were to become the army's victuals.

By March 13, 1071, the emperor was already on the Asian shores of the Bosphorus on his way to the expeditionary force in Anatolia. During his crossing, as he was no doubt taking in the cold breeze of an early spring day on the deck of the imperial galley, a black pigeon landed on his arms. This no doubt surprised the men around him. At the beginning of an important and dangerous operation, people's nerves were frayed. Everyone was anxiously looking for signs that would reveal the future. Writing a few years after this campaign, Attaleiates notes that the imperial entourage went in interpretative frenzy. Everyone agreed this had been a sign of important events to come, not a very risky assessment to be fair, given that the emperor was on his way to joining the largest Roman campaign army to have been assembled in decades. People disagreed, however, as to the import of the sign; was it good or bad? The emperor appeared nonplused and sent the bird to the empress, who in turn deemed it an auspicious sign. Eudokia had for a while been unhappy with Romanos and Attaleiates had picked up palace gossip that spoke of tensions in the imperial bedchamber. Yet upon receiving the pigeon the empress joined Romanos on the Asian coast presenting the army with an image of royal unity and no doubt angering the relatives of her late husband who did not welcome such affirmations of her dedication to the emperor.

Soothing as this sign of domestic concord, no doubt was for many of Romanos' supporters, others remained weary. For some, the choice of location for the mustering of the troops and for the setting up of the imperial camp was less than satisfactory. Attaleiates tells us that the original landing site of Heria was bypassed, the imperial coterie moving to Helenopolis. To the soldiers, the name of this new location was an opportunity for word-puns. The city of Constantine's mother, Helen, became Heleinopolis (Patheticville) in the lips of Romanos' warriors. For those who took note of such things, the wordplay itself was a bad omen. And if that were not enough, the central pillar of the emperor's tent broke bringing it all down to the ground, an insignificant event in the grand scheme of things, another instance, however, where symbolism outweighed reality.

In a climate, rife with speculation about names, random events, and all manner of portents, Romanos led the army down the empire's long military roads on his way east. A Babel of languages, accents, dresses, and even cooking tastes snaked its way through the Anatolian countryside, meeting on its way the changing faces of Roman farmers, herders, ranchers, and town-folk. The cheer of the bystanders was surely frequently muffled by complaints, the inevitable product of the army's crop requisitions. Here in the fields of Anatolia, before Attaleiates' eyes, the ancient paradox of empires and states was being played out: to protect the emperor's subjects from the anticipated violence of marauding foreigners, the Roman state, like so many other states before and after it, inflicted upon its own constituents the metronomic "violence" of the taxman. Attaleiates was surely very busy at the center of this errant multiethnic society of warriors and camp attendants. Farmers' crops were attacked, fruit trees were rendered bare, and the occasional scuffle erupted between the local population and soldiers of this marching army. Imperial documents which for centuries guaranteed exemptions from crop requisitions were rendered meaningless with but one verbal order as warriors walked through a monastery's lands. On occasion, there was even fighting between the different ethnic groups of soldiers angling for the emperor's favor and for primacy among the ranks of the army. Attaleiates had to intervene and dispense justice, sometimes in the presence of the emperor, who as the ultimate authority, often meted out very harsh punishments. To the civilian judge, the quick wrath of military justice and the exigencies of army discipline appeared so extreme that in his notes he preserved comments critical of the emperor.³⁵ At the end of each day, however, Attaleiates and the soldiers he traveled with went to their respective tents with plenty of time to contemplate the coming days of even more arduous campaigning. Thoughts of glory no doubt went through their minds, but on occasion fear ruled the night. When fire burned the emperor's tent and then engulfed the imperial stables sending flaming steeds running amok around the Roman camp, Attaleiates could not but interpret the event as a bad omen. The intellectuals around him, all men with at least some rudimentary "training" in astrology and divination, and an even better knowledge of the classics would have heard of a similar event in the camp of Emperor Julian during his fatal Persian campaign.³⁶

As the army moved further east, reaching the province of Charisanon, the emperor billeted troops on his personal property, whenever possible,

thus making a statement, for all to clearly digest, that he was ready to personally shoulder the heavy burden of supplying the empire's expeditionary force. There was reason for such public display of generosity. Despite his efforts and explicit orders, his mercenaries were not always in their best behavior. The Germans among them proved a headache when they raided the farms of the locals and forcefully requisitioned their harvest.³⁷ In response to such outrage the emperor, once again, harshly punished the culprits only to then face an attack on his person by an incensed German contingent. As judge of the army Attaleiates would have been directly involved in the negotiations that eventually put an end to the tense standoff between Romanos and his foreign helpers. When a few days later the emperor's expeditionary force went through the battlefield where but a year ago the short Turk by the side of the commander in chief had defeated the army of Manuel Komnenos, the hundreds of soldier's bodies decomposing under the Anatolian sky, untended by a caring hand, send a chill down the spine of even the bravest, most experienced, and confident of soldiers.

To this day, soldiers remain a superstitious lot, carefully seeking divine assistance, and making sure to keep good credit in God's ledger. The life of the conscript in the Greek army is still punctuated by numerous ceremonies of prayer, blessing of flags and arms, as well as celebrations of the lives of a host of Byzantine military saints. Images of those same Saints, the Virgin Mary and other religious paraphernalia, all centrally procured by the ministry of defense and mass produced by contractors who seem to specialize in exactly that kind of industry (a military-spiritual complex of sorts)—are part of a conscript's daily experience. Closer to North America, the sustained effort by evangelicals to establish a presence among the ranks of the US armed forces is in tune with the very ancient association between fighting men and the divinity that is supposed to protect war's disciples. It is therefore hardly surprising that in the context of a dangerous campaign against an able enemy Romanos' soldiers kept their eyes peeled for even the slightest evidence of divine displeasure.

Soon the army entered a no-man's land of severely looted territory. Here Romanos split his forces sending a part toward Chliat—the original target of Attaleiates' 1069 military blueprint—while directing the rest toward the fortress of Mantzikert, a few kilometers to the north shore of Lake Van. His decision was contested. There were some among the ranks of his officer corps who felt that the army should remain intact. Others were confident that the imperial host, even if split in two, was more than

adequate to effectively deal with any conceivable threat. Attaleiates followed Romanos' half of the army to Mantzikert, where the emperor, much as he had done before Hierapolis in 1068, immediately put his Armenian infantry to work and invested the city. The sight of the emperor's forces with their effective siege train convinced the Seljuq guards of the fortress to surrender. Romanos could already at this early stage in the campaign boast some success, having with minimum effort occupied a strategically important fortress in Armenia.

From here, however, the affairs of the Romans deteriorated and may be followed as we weave in and out of Attaleiates' dramatic account.³⁸ "News began to arrive that enemy forces from somewhere were attacking the soldiers' servants who were out gathering the loot, harassing and wearing them out." Seeking to address this problem, Romanos dispatched the *magistros* Nikephoros Bryennios with what he thought was an adequate force under his command. Bryennios "took his stand in the front lines and attempted some missile skirmishing and cavalry fighting, but with uncertain results." Attaleiates considers it important for his readers to know the reason behind Bryennios' subpar performance and explains that "these Turks were more courageous than others we had experienced, as they charged more boldly and stood up to their opponents in hand to hand combat." All Bryennios could do in the face of unexpected enemy tenaciousness was call for reinforcements.

Responding to this developing battlefield situation, Romanos dispatched the *katepano* of Theodosiopolis Basilakios, to offer assistance to the beleaguered Bryennios. Together the two commanders fought the Turks yet, eventually, miscommunication and a battlefield accident—he fell off his horse—led to Basilakios' capture by the enemy. When the emperor was apprised of this, he "was compelled to take the rest of the army out to see what was happening and to fight." Since the Turks failed to engage Romanos' superior force, the Romans rode back into their camp at the onset of the evening. In the course of a moonless night, the Roman army slept an uneasy sleep safely enveloped by trenches and moats. While the camp offered a measure of security to the Romans, the army's European contingents mistrusted their mercenary colleagues of nomadic origins. What if these men, who so looked like the enemy in the eyes of the Romans, decided to turn on them? What if the enemy was in fact closer than they thought, plotting an attack from the neighboring tent?

Attaleiates himself had described the Pantzinakoi as snakes in his *History*.³⁹ That was of course well before Romanos defeated them in the Balkans only to then recruit them in Romanía's armies. Would they perhaps bite, now that they faced an enemy, who in Byzantine eyes looked so similar to them? The next day all those questions appeared to be answered in the affirmative when "a certain Tamis went over to the enemy" throwing the Romans into some real consternation because they "suspected that the rest of that people, whose way of life was so similar to that of the Turks, might join them and fight on their side." In the midst of suspicion and fear, there were nevertheless displays of efficient soldiering, as Roman "infantry took their bows and went out and killed a large number of Turks, which forced them to stay clear of the camp."

On the morrow, Romanos who had despaired waiting for Tarchaneiotēs' troops to return from Chliat prepared his available forces for battle. The army, however, still needed assurances that its nomadic mercenaries would remain loyal and Attaleiates, who was conferring in the imperial tent with Romanos, advised the emperor to have the Scythians give him assurance of their loyalty by oath. We can imagine that this oath was delivered in a public space at the very center of the Roman camp for all to see. In the middle of this tableau, the judge of the army Michael Attaleiates administered oaths to the Patzinakoi. The emperor was now ready for battle, which was only postponed by the arrival of a Turkish embassy seeking peace. Romanos quickly dismissed the enemy emissaries without any offers for de-escalation. He was now committed to decisive battle. Marshaling his forces, Romanos marched against the Seljuq line with the full might of Rome.

Before well-marshaled Roman infantry, the Seljuq force retreated in time-honored nomadic fashion. Romanos' orderly march pushed the Roman formation ever forward until the onset of the evening convinced him to end his onwards push. As the order was given for the turning of the army pennons, the visual mark of the commander's call for orderly retreat, Romanos' enemies, so tells us Attaleiates, found the opportunity they were looking for to make a political power play. Andronikos Doukas, entrusted with the Roman army's second line, led his soldiers in retreat, choosing to interpret the sign of the turned pennons as evidence of defeat. By doing so, Andronikos left Romanos' front line stranded deep into the battlefield, against a fluid and mobile enemy force, which was now free to execute an enveloping maneuver on the Roman vanguard. From here on everything turned sour for the Romans.

Come sunset, their emperor was captured, scores of soldiers and camp attendants killed, and the dream of imperial restoration in Asia shattered. Saved from this chaotic battlefield by pure luck and, perhaps, heroism, Attaleiates followed with other stragglers the long road to the Pontic city of Trebizond and from its harbor picked, along with many other Roman survivors, the first available ship to the capital and the uncharted waters of an emerging Doukas administration. By way of different avenues, the surviving Roman forces, the bulk of the army in fact, under the command of Andronikos Doukas and Tarchaneiotes, regrouped and declared their allegiance to that very administration. Everyone now prepared for the next act of this Roman drama: civil war.

NOTES

1. George T. Dennis (ed.), *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Panegyricae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1994), p. 180, oration 19, lines 10–25.
2. Psellos, *Chronographia* VII, Michael VI. 3 (Renaud, pp. 84–85) on the emperor insulting Isaakios Komnenos.
3. Maurice, *Strategikon* in George T. Dennis (ed. and trans.), *Das Strategikon des Maurikios* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), p. 250, lines 9–11 [Book VII.11] on not leading soldiers to battle after a defeat; G. T. Dennis, *Maurice's Strategikon. Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), p. 72 for the translation.
4. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 267, Bekker 146; Ray Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow: Roman Rule and Greek Culture in Cappadocia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 23–24 on horse rearing in Anatolia.
5. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 191, Bekker 104.
6. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 193, Bekker 105.
7. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 359, Bekker 196–97.
8. Gilbert Dagron (ed.), *Le traité sur la guérilla (De velitatione) de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas (963–969)* (Paris: CNRS, 1986).
9. John G. C. Anderson, “The Road System of Asia Minor,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* XVII (1897), pp. 22, 23 and 28 for the relevant map (with caution regarding the accuracy of the road system).
10. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 195–99, Bekker 107–8.
11. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 246–47, Bekker 135.
12. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 416–17, Bekker 229.
13. Theodosios Diakonon in Hugo Criscuolo (ed.), *Theodosii Diaconi De Creta capta* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1979) for the type of text that could have shaped pro-Romanos propaganda.

14. George T. Dennis (ed.), *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Panegyricae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1994), pp. 175–76, oration 18.
15. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 175, Bekker 96 regarding raids on Antioch.
16. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 198–201, Bekker 109.
17. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 210–13, Bekker 116 on establishing Byzantine rule at Hierapolis.
18. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 212–13, Bekker 116–17.
19. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 219, Bekker 120 on avoiding Antioch to save it from food crisis.
20. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 220–21, Bekker 120–21.
21. Lucian, Macrobian (ed.), A. M. Marmon (1913), vol. 1, 22.19–23 on Polybios' riding accident and death; Eduard Kurtz and Francis Drexler (ed.), *Michaelis Pselli Scripta Minora magnam partem adhuc inedita II: Epistulae* (Milan, 1941), letter 232 on Psellos' fear of horseback riding.
22. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 216–19, Bekker 119–20.
23. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 224–25, Bekker 123.
24. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 233–39, Bekker 128–31.
25. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 226–27, Bekker 124.
26. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 230–31, Bekker 126.
27. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 230–33, Bekker 127.
28. Konstantinos Manasses in Odysseas Lampsides (ed.), *Constantini Manassis Breviarium Chronicum* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 1997), p. 346, lines 6387–6393.
29. Psellos' letter to the Konstantinos the nephew of Keroularios in Kenneth Snipes, "A Letter of Michael Psellus to Constantine the Nephew of Michael Cerularios," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 22.1 (Spring 1981), pp. 99–100 for the Greek text p. 101 for the translation.
30. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 246–47, Bekker 135.
31. Maurice, *Strategikon* in George T. Dennis (ed. and trans.), *Das Strategikon des Maurikios* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), pp. 126–28 [Book II.9] on not leading soldiers to battle after a defeat; George T. Dennis, *Maurice's Strategikon. Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), p. 29 for the translation.
32. Leendert G. Westernik (ed.), *Michaelis Pselli Poemata* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1992), pp. 190–233, poem 9 *A Medical Poem*.
33. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 255, Bekker 139.
34. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 256–61, Bekker 141–42.
35. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 279, Bekker 153.
36. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Roman History*, XXIII.5.12–13 on Julian in John C. Rolfe (trans.), *Ammianus Marcellinus: History Books 20–26* (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library), p. 341.

37. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 266–69, Bekker 146–47 on the Germans.
38. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 280–302, Bekker 155–66 for a page range of the battle of Mantzikert from this point to Romanos' release from captivity.
39. Attaleiates, *History*, p. 54, Bekker 31.



Byzantine “Republicanism”: Attaleiates’ Politics of Accommodation and Self-Interest

Back from the battlefields after Romanos’ disastrous campaign in Armenia, Attaleiates was hard at work trying to settle into a less than friendly court. Having orbited imperial power in the years of Romanos’ reign, he was likely suspect in the eyes of the new regime. It may in fact be that this consideration made him rush to Constantinople after the dust had settled on the battlefield of Mantzikert. Army regiments and courtiers, men like Attaleiates’ friend Maleses, flocked to Romanos’ standard after the latter was released from his eight-day captivity in the hands of the Sultan. Attaleiates who was in Trebizond when he received the joyous news of Romanos’ survival joined instead those members of the imperial *taxis* who sought the fastest possible means to reach the capital.

His choice was practical if not altogether principled. A few years later, a contemporary from the ranks of the army wrote a book of advice for his children, in which he argued that: “the emperor in control of Constantinople always wins.”¹ Much like this pragmatic commander, Attaleiates may have reckoned that the Constantinopolitan regime would prevail and that, despite his popularity, Romanos was a spent force, as the capital, its people, and the edifice of the state were all arrayed against him. Reflecting on all this in writings circulated among peers and friends during the ensuing decade, he presented the beaten emperor as Rome’s betrayed hero. In the autumn of 1071, however, he judged it prudent to rush back to Constantinople, offer his loyalty to the now dominant Doukas faction, and embrace his son Theodore whom he had not seen

for nearly six months. The boy along with Attaleiates' dependents and household was likely worried sick, given the swirling rumors of the emperor's defeat.

Once in the capital, the judge worked frantically to restore his position at court and by 1075, when he received from Michael VII Doukas a grant of extensive tax privileges for his newly founded monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon, he was evidently once again a regular member of the courtly scene. In order to come closer to the bookish young emperor and establish himself in the Doukas circles, Attaleiates took a page from Psellos' guidebook of sycophantic self-promotion. Michael Doukas was a naïve fellow, yet to Psellos' credit, the emperor, whom writers of the period treat as a plaything in his tutor's hands, valued education, and erudition. Psellos himself wrote a long legal poem in which he developed the central tenets of Roman law for Michael, while Symeon Seth dedicated to him a work on nutrition and on the dietary properties of a series of comestibles.² Thus, when Attaleiates sought to establish his own credentials as a loyal servant of the emperor and an intellectual to boot, he chose this well-tryed method and offered Michael a book, an abridgment—more scholarly than Psellos' poem—of the essential points of Roman law.

This text, known to us as the *Ponema Nomikon*, opens with a historical overview of the Roman legal tradition going all the way back to the first Roman kings and the republic. It then structures its material in a manner that casts imperial rule as an enterprise bound by laws. This commitment to the rule of law is evident in Attaleiates' other legislative activity and also more broadly colors his view of politics. It is of course with trepidation that one ventures on ground as shaky and shifty as a medieval individual's political opinions. For much contemporary scholarship, a Byzantine's political universe was monolithic and simple enough to reconstruct. As the story goes, Byzantium was a monarchical state ruled by the representative of God on earth. It derived legitimacy from its long Roman past and from the connection of this Roman history with God's plan for humanity. The emperor stood at the center of this ideological construct, not quite divine in this new Christian era, but bathed in God's approbation. Every component of the state was linked directly to his almost superhuman will and submitted to his divinely conceived ordinances. From the emperor came justice and from him the wealth and goodwill that allowed the upper classes to establish their authority. The emperor was finally the guarantor of his subjects' safety and prosperity.

Byzantine authors are thought to have written history within the parameters set by this ideology in turn reinforcing it with their every reference to imperial omnipotence and divine will.

By privileging one type of document, the imperial panegyric and the Christian theology of power tied to it, over the more complex and demanding historical and legal texts, we have somewhat uncritically adopted the imperial view of politics. Would we privilege, however, White House press releases and Downing Street briefs in a study of American or British politics and political ideology? Or would we perhaps cast a wider net? What about society at large, what did people think of politics? During Michael VII's reign, both Psellos and Attaleiates started working on ideas about the body politic which, while remaining firmly within Roman traditions, radically departed from the schema described above. The two intellectuals mined a rich vein of Roman political thought and produced interpretations of contemporary politics that took heed of the altered face of Romanía's eleventh-century society. Psellos was the first to put pen on paper. Along with his legal poem, which itself harked back to the days of the Roman Republic, he offered Michael VII a second text, a peculiar little Chronicle recording Rome's history from the days of its first kings to the mid-tenth century.

We have more or less ignored this peculiar and relatively little-studied text, overwhelmed by the narrative brilliance and sheer fun of Psellos' masterpiece, the *Chronographia*. Yet Psellos was onto something very interesting as he wrote this less known text, which was addressed to an emperor and was intended to shape his worldview. In it, after narrating the gradual slide of the Roman monarchy to tyranny, Psellos speaks of Brutus' admirable expulsion of Rome's last king and of the institution of the republic. No doubt to the surprise of many a palace insider, the *Historia Syntomos* informed Michael that Rome had been best ruled in the days of the Republic, when two annually elected consuls managed the affairs of the Roman state.³ Is it likely that Psellos saw in the republic, or in a regime that borrowed from its panoply of practices and traditions, a means to institutionalize the position of educated men like Attaleiates and himself in the Byzantine political apparatus? What we find in the rest of his body of work suggests that the answer may have to be a cautious yes. Psellos left hints of his republican agenda even in the *Chronographia* where despite his negative use of the term democracy he cites republican Roman and democratic Greek leaders as models of virtue.

Attaleiates, already the author of a text on Roman law, was working on very similar ideas about a decade after Psellos published the *Historia Syntomos*. The world they both lived in was changing and people of their class were trying to find ways to make sense of these changes. Attaleiates had personal experience of such commotion in 1077 when he found himself in the midst of a civic moment that highlights the social flux of his times. From the safety of his office, he could look back to the events of 1077 and ponder on their significance. It had been another difficult year for the Romans whose forces were hard pressed on every front. The Seljuqs were pushing hard on the Asian frontiers and in the Balkans; the Patzinakoi were restless in the lands around the Danube. To make things worse, there was discontent in the ranks of the army and its aristocratic leadership. While the empire was in pitiable state and even as Michael VII was fast acquiring nicknames associated with his inability to efficiently and cheaply provision the capital with food, Attaleiates decided to visit his estates in and around the city of Raidestos. As a master of men and owner of substantial tracks of land, he regularly toured his estates in order to ensure their proper operation. The visit was also necessary as the town and its people at the time suffered from a state-imposed monopoly on the sale of grain, which had led to hoarding and to government repression of those farmers who resisted imperial intervention in the local economy. As a landowner and employer of tenants on his lands, Attaleiates had reasons to be in Raidestos in the summer around the time of the harvest.

When traveling to his estates the judge was always accompanied and rode on horseback, pretty much as if going on campaign. The number of people in his entourage is unknown, yet his entry in Raidestos would have been a much-anticipated moment on the part of the local community given his links to the court and his rank. As we have already seen, he had carefully marked his ties to the city and its people through a series of donations to local churches and monasteries, while his home was located within the walls of the town. Much like in Greek villages to this day, people would recognize his house as *ton Attaleiatou* (Attaleiates'), and the caretaker would have carefully prepared it for his master's arrival. Yet this routine summer visit was to put Attaleiates in a dangerous situation. Soon after his arrival, the *doux* Nikephoros Bryennios, governor of the city of Dyrrhachion on the Adriatic Sea, rebelled against Michael Doukas' authority. This development should not have troubled the judge, as in normal circumstances it would have taken weeks

for Bryennios to muster his troops and march toward Thrace from his power base in the Western Balkans. On this occasion, however, things proved more complex. Writing in the twelfth century, the princess Anna Komnene, married to Bryennios' grandson, noted that the population of the Balkans flocked in droves to the rebel's standards. It seems that the *doux* had agents bent on mobilizing the people to his side in all the important urban centers of the area.⁴ In Raidestos, that agent was a woman. Batatzina was a member of an important aristocratic family.

When rumors of Bryennios' unwelcome rebellion reached Thrace, the judge no doubt assumed that he had enough time to conclude his business in Raidestos before retreating in timely fashion to the safety of the capital. Not long afterward, however, a knock on the door in the middle of the night brought him news of a rapidly changing situation. A man he had previously benefited in some manner, conceivably a client of his or maybe a tenant, came to his home and informed him of meetings among the city's elite in the course of which Batatzina sought to bring local notables over to the side of the rebel. Attaleiates who had not been approached, an indication that he was probably seen as a loyalist, now faced the need to reassess his position among the citizens of Raidestos.⁵ Thinking fast, he decided to make a run for the capital. As in 1071, when he left behind him Trebizond, friends, and the newly freed Romanos on the first available boat to the capital, he placed his eggs in the imperial basket once more. The emperor in Constantinople was bound to be the winner on this occasion as well.

Batzina, however, had placed armed guards at the city gates and complicated his escape from Raidestos. Early in the summer morning, the silk-clad official met the determined lady and her citizen soldiers. A tense face-off ensued during which Attaleiates argued with a mix of threats and reason that it was in the aristocratic woman's interest to offer him a way out. Thinking to the future Batatzina understood that the judge could prove a useful ally should the rebellion fail. The city of Raidestos, her family, her sons, would all need a friend at court to make the case for clemency. He owed her one for being set free. Writing about those events a year or two later Attaleiates offered interesting details regarding the city's preparations for the rebellion. He noted that the people assembled and together decided to join the rebel. Once the decision was taken they proceeded to fortify the city with the help of newly arrived rebel troops and burn a number of structures by the city's harbor that would make it easier to defend the area from an attack coming

over the sea. Then, altogether citizens and soldiers moved toward the neighboring fortified town of Panion, which had not yet declared for the rebel, and besieged it. In his description of events in Raidestos, Attaleiates is in effect narrating what amounts to popular mobilization and action. The upper social strata led the city, yet decisions were taken collectively and, most importantly, the citizens acted as one properly constituted political and military unit; almost like a city-state.

Throughout 1078 and 79 Constantinople itself was a city in unrest. Rumors were rife of new rebellions stirring in the provinces. To make things worse, southern winds carried the sound from the Turkish war drums from the city of Chalkedon on the Asian coast. The people of the capital were tired and demoralized. The previous emperor, Michael VII Doukas had presided over the gradual decomposition of the empire, the secession of significant parts of Asian territories, and perhaps most significantly for the Constantinopolitans themselves, extensive grain shortages and famine. The crowd was clearly at the limits of its tolerance when it greeted with cheers as a savior the man who put an end to the Doukas regime, Nikephoros Botaneiates. Attaleiates cannot have felt comfortable in such fluid political environment. He had witnessed in his years as a resident of the capital a series of popular upheavals and knew that they were volatile, highly destructive affairs. The new emperor soon proved to be less of a savior and more of a poser. Botaneiates looks great on the pages of an expensive manuscript his predecessor commissioned with homilies of Saint John Chrysostom. He appears young and elegant. In reality, he was an older man well past his prime. His military exploits lay in his distant past. For the people writing after his reign, he was a buffoon

He sat high on throne wrought of silver
 Honouring with offices those who came to him:
 Blacksmiths, carpenters, diggers, merchants, farmers,
 cobblers, rope-makers, fullers, workers in vineyards.
 He debased and defiled what was valuable and illustrious,
 by handing down glory to lowly labourers,
 which former emperors had bestowed as a trophy
 for great feats of valour and achievements
 and [reserved] for those of illustrious lineage and blood.⁶

Aristocratic snobbery notwithstanding, this scurrilous text reveals a social dynamic, which Attaleiates had already witnessed in Raidestos. The rising elites of the empire, merchants, and tradespeople, who benefited from

increasing volumes of trade and commercial activity, were useful allies to any emperor looking to bolster his claim on the throne. They maintained direct links to the populace, as they were themselves products of the street and fed the expanding roster of the Roman Senate with a steady stream of cash-rich members. In the process, they frequently contested the authority of traditional stakeholders in empire-wide tests of will. We thus see them spring into action in 1074 at Antioch, where according to the twelfth-century historian Nikephoros Bryennios

Some of those who had recently risen in status, burning with envy for those in power and for the *doux*, armed the crowd against them and the former they blockaded in the citadel guarding the gates, while they attacked and killed some of the latter. As for the rest, they turned towards the citadel and stormed the houses of the ruling class pilfering their money.⁷

The *doux* Isaakios Komnenos, elder brother of future Emperor Alexios I, and member of the very same established class of notables under attack at the Syrian metropolis was able to quell the rebellion only with difficulty. In this context of social flux and loudly beating war drums, with Botaneiates looking to the empire’s new rich for support against external and internal enemies, Attaleiates picked his pen to write about a popular rebellion in the empire’s recent past.

The judge kindled vivid memories from his youth as he unspooled the thread of the story line. Even as tensions rose in the capital in 1078 with the prospects of riots and urban disturbances at an all-time high, he wrote about the popular uprising that toppled the Emperor Michael V some thirty-five years earlier. The rudiments of the story are simple. Michael V succeeded his uncle Michael IV to the throne. He owed his rise to power to Empress Zoe, his uncle’s wife, who adopted him after intense lobbying by influential members of Michael IV’s clan. Upon being adopted and offered, the title of *Kaisar* Michael swore oaths to faithfully submit to Zoe’s authority. Once, however, his uncle died and Michael was crowned emperor in his place he felt stifled by Zoe’s presence and by her legitimate, not to say venerable, dynastic claims to power. Michael, who wanted to rule as sole emperor, started looking for ways to sideline the empress. To test popular opinion, he staged a lavish imperial procession the likes of which emperors orchestrated on a regular basis to court their subjects’ favor and impress their majesty upon them.

The event itself was well received and Michael convinced himself that he was the people's darling. Emboldened he sent guards to arrest Zoe and lead her to a monastery outside the city's limits, where her influence and authority, far from the wellspring of popular support was expected to wane. At this point, however, the people got wind of the development and shortly their indignation burst out into furious rebellion. Days of violence in the capital led to the end of Michael's reign after less than six months on the throne. At least three thousand dead civilians as well as significant damage to the center of the city must be added to the historian's ledger.

If our interest lies in the details of the rebellion itself then we should not be using Attaleiates' account, relying instead on Skylitzes and Psellos' more detailed story lines. What makes his recollection of the event fascinating, however, is how he treats the participants and main heroes of the rebellion, the people of Constantinople. If Attaleiates had modeled his storytelling on the writings of other historians, who had in years past described similar occurrences, he would certainly have sketched a rather negative portrait of the rebelled population. Put simply, Byzantine authors did not like "the people." Like many new rich seeking to escape their social milieu, historians—more often than not men of middling background who scaled the social ladder by means of education and service to the state—developed a passionate dislike for the unwashed masses of Constantinople.

Writing more than a century after Attaleiates' death, Niketas Choniates described the Constantinopolitan plebs as disorderly, difficult to control, rash in behavior and crooked in their ways. For Choniates, the variety of peoples and the diverse trades that all together made up the populace constituted a collective whose will easily swayed one way or the other. The people therefore acted without reason and rarely if ever accepted good advice, nearly always hurting their own interests in the process. Having delivered this scathing rebuke of his fellow citizens, Choniates turns his attention on the impulsive nature of the populace and notes that often just one word was enough to dispose the crowd to rebellion. Our Constantinopolitan functionary tells us that this was to be expected, given that the people really had no concern for dynastic legitimacy and monarchy.⁸

In the late 1070s, writing in a city teetering on the verge of social explosion, Attaleiates put his own spin on the 1042 rebellion. In doing so, he staged his own rebellion against elite critiques of the populace

such as the one presented here. Attaleiates' crowd first appears in the pages of the *History* as a gossiping collection of individuals. After Michael's grand procession, the people in the streets and the city's markets discussed the events of the day and expressed their approbation for the grand imperial show. Soon, however, this happy, benign, and barely coherent body of people starts acquiring a collective consciousness. A reader expecting Attaleiates to follow established models of narration similar to Choniates' bilious description of the crowd is in for a surprise. From early on Attaleiates musters the vocabulary of democracy to set up the people as a formally constituted political body, a rational actor, reaching decisions through careful and reasoned deliberation and acting as agents of justice, guided by a force up above, pretty much as any Byzantine ruler was supposedly guided by God.

Attaleiates' use of the vocabulary of democracy could be attributed to the Byzantine tendency to use classical terms in order to color contemporary reality. On this occasion, however, we are dealing with something different. Attaleiates' Constantinopolitan populace is presented as a *demos* and a *boule* and proves adept in mobilizing allies and organizing resistance to the emperor. They are assembled in the forum of Constantine, which the author links to the ancient Athenian *agora*, through some deft messaging. Most importantly, the people's decisions can be judged from the actions that follow. They collectively attack the imperial agents sent by Michael V to address them, following in unison the example of one man and most essentially, they appear to be guided by God. Then they destroyed property belonging to the family of the emperor, which was built on the sweat and tears of the oppressed poor and later they looted monasteries richly endowed through similar processes of expropriation and extortion. If the judge felt sorry for the afflicted monks he certainly did not see it fit to report his disapproval. The people's final action is the blinding of Michael along with his closest and most loyal ally the *nobellissimos* Konstantinos. They were dragged out of the church, where they had taken refuge and taken to a public spot in the city where they were blinded in an act that was clearly against canon law, violating the church as a place of asylum. Attaleiates does not seem to mind. He in fact describes this action as divine justice that befell the oath-breaking emperor.⁹

Here we are then, with Attaleiates in his late fifties, a member of the senate, a holder of courtly titles that evoked Rome's republican past, in the midst of a city in turmoil and in a court brimming with

representatives of the empire's urban strata, writing an account of a popular rebellion in which the people appear as the true upholders of dynastic rights and of the monarchy. The judge had every reason to be bilious in his attitude toward the crowd. The citizens of Raidestos who had only recently rebelled against Michael Doukas had also destroyed his property in the city, treating him as a loyalist and therefore an enemy. Despite that he was open to something new. Attaleiates was carefully unveiling his "republican" side. In the *History*, the most patriotic Romans are the ancient heroes of the republic, the Scipiones and Aemilii, who offer his readers *exempla* of virtue to set up against the vices of his contemporaries. It is in republican Rome that Attaleiates finds proper devotion to Roman custom, religion, and the fatherland. Much like Psellos, who praised Lucius Junius Brutus' Roman regicide and the balanced system of governance of the republic, Attaleiates looked to the past for a model of governance, which would accommodate all the sometimes chaotic, yet creative and dynamic forces that constituted the polity of the Romans in the eleventh century.

The ultimate impact of Attaleiates' historically embedded political science is hard to gauge. He did not live to experience the rise of the Komnenoi, who rather than share power with an urban senate, colonized the state with members of aristocratic families they grafted onto their own bloodline and promoted an exclusive aristocratic ideal inimical to republican musings, one based on antiquity of lineage and heroic, Homeric even, deeds. And yet, the language of the republic did survive, as writers in the twelfth century followed Attaleiates and Psellos' practice of using republican heroes as models of Roman virtue.¹⁰ Attaleiates appropriated the lineage of the ancient Scipiones and the Fabii for his contemporary Byzantine Emperors; Bryennios and his wife, Alexios' daughter Anna Komnene, did much the same. Republican heroes were there to stay even if the republic was once again consigned to the calends of history.

It is not too bold a statement to note that what emerges from the *History* as Attaleiates' political ideology was, at least to some extent, grounded on his own social experiences and sought to address his concerns about the position of his social peers in Romanía's changing social landscape. In many ways, Attaleiates articulated a political theory of self-interest that envisioned enhanced influence in the body politic for newly emerging groupings. Yet, this is also a somewhat unfair assessment of his thinking. Self-interest did not have to demonstrate itself in the

tortured form of elaborate re-conceptualizations of Romanía’s politics. There were plenty of men like Attaleiates, who had risen from a mid-dling economic background through education and skills, had integrated themselves in the upper echelons of the administration and remained attached to the theology of power produced at court by the emperor’s image-makers, never hinting at the possibility of political change. Unlike such men, Attaleiates and with him Psellos to be sure, weave in their work a bottom-up vision of politics predicated upon a two-way interaction between an active citizenry and its rule-bound rulers. Most importantly, living in a time of profound political and military crisis, Attaleiates is one of the few Byzantines we know of, who appears to have connected the political and military condition of the state with the social forces fueling the crisis. For Attaleiates then, politics—usually treated by medieval writers as a field of action for emperors, or, in more nuanced analysis, as an arena for the clash between courtiers and army leaders—was influenced, and ultimately defined, by changes in the societal level. Eleventh-century Emperors from Michael V to Nikephoros Botaneiates crudely attempted to harness what they saw as rising urban strata to prop up their faltering regimes and bolster their positions on the throne. It was left, however, to intellectuals like Attaleiates to provide the ideological framework for such transition.

That said the *History* is no manifesto against the monarchy. Attaleiates consistently sought a strong emperor, who would keep the polity in order and successfully lead the troops in battle. Ironically his answer to that call was Alexios Komnenos, the man who would in time put a conclusive end to any further discussion of “republicanism.” Nevertheless, the phenomenon, which Attaleiates was trying to address in his writing, namely the rise of new, wealthy, and influential urban strata was not to go away. In writing about her father’s campaigning in Asia Minor in the 1070s, Anna Komnene described his interaction with the citizens of Amaseia. In the year 1074, the Emperor Michael VII Doukas sent Alexios on a campaign against the Norman rebel Rouselios. Reaching the city of Amaseia the young *generalissimo* had to negotiate with its leaders and the local population in order to gain their support for his actions against the Norman mercenary. In presenting Alexios’ interaction with the Amaseians, his daughter Anna cast him in the guise of a Greek orator in the *agora* addressing the *demos* of a city-state.¹¹ Everything, from Alexios’ gestures, to his language and even the presence of demagogues in the crowd, worked to replicate a sense of democratic deliberations.

Sixty years after Attaleiates' death, the language of democracy and republicanism was still an apt tool for the description of certain social and political phenomena.

Sat before his desk, with cheap cotton-based chancery-grade paper before him, Attaleiates wrote about Botaneiates, noting that he took no heed of the state's need for money and resources that would be devoted to the dangers pressing the polity from every side. Instead the elderly emperor proved a most generous patron of the people of Constantinople, making even the beggars rich. The language used is ambiguous and one could read the text both as praise of generosity and as castigation of profligate spending in a time of crisis. What is, however, important is that in Attaleiates' writings and then in the venomous twelfth-century critique of this opening of the senate, we see discussions about a new consensus regarding the division of the pie. Attaleiates and his peers were political beings who enjoyed life in the public sphere. They debated the world around them, took opposing positions, organized into competing parties on account of those positions, and in doing so produced a peculiarly Roman conception and form of politics.

NOTES

1. Kekaumenos see Tsougarakis, *Κεκαυμένος, Στρατηγικόν*, p. 234; Charlotte Roueché's online translation under *IV. About Rebellions and Loyalty* in the sixth paragraph for the text.
2. Bernhard Langkavel (ed.), *Simeonis Sethi Syntagma de Alimentorum Facultatibus* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1868); Gunter Weiss, "Die 'Synopsis legum' des Michael Psellos," *Fontes Minores* 2 (Frankfurt, 1977), pp. 147–214.
3. Psellos, "Historia Syntomos," in *Michaelis Pselli Historia Syntomos*, ed. and trans. Jan Aerts (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1990), p. 8, lines 22–24.
4. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 18.28–19.32 on the general popular response to Bryennios.
5. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 455–57, Bekker 249–51.
6. Konstantinos Manasses, in Odysseas Lampsides (ed.), *Constantini Manassis Breviarium Chronicum* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 1997), p. 357, lines 6594–602.
7. Nikephoros Bryennios, *Material for History*, II. 29 in Paul Gautier (ed. and trans.), *Nicéphore Bryennios, Histoire* (Bruxelles: Byzantion, 1975), p. 205, lines 19–25.

8. Niketas Choniates, “History,” in *Niketae Choniatae Historia*, ed. Jan L. van Dieten (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1975), pp. 233–34, Bekker 304–5; Speros Vryonis Jr., “Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963), pp. 291–92 offered a lively translation of this passage that echoes in the text above.
9. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 26–29, Bekker 17.
10. Leonora Neville, *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: The Material for History of Nikephoros Bryennios* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) for a wonderful survey of that process.
11. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 15, line 20; p. 16, line 48.



CHAPTER 11

Piety, Tax-Heavens and the Future of the Family

THE MONASTERY AND ITS LINKS TO THE ARISTOCRACY

Approaching the 60th year of his life, at the end of the seventh decade of the eleventh century, Michael Attaleiates had a lot to be proud of. He had served three consecutive administrations as advisor to the crown and had been a member of the senate for some twenty years. He held impressive titles alluding to the glorious republican past of the Roman Empire, and above all, he was respected at court. He had achieved that while remaining true to his core beliefs regarding the proper governance of the state. Survival in the competitive world of the Byzantine court required that he occasionally adjust his rhetoric and toss a sycophantic word or two toward those emperors who kept rewarding him for his loyalty, yet his writings reveal a man who knew what was right and kept pursuing it to the end. In the late 1070s, Attaleiates was close to the old, largely “sedentary,” and inactive Emperor Nikephoros Botaneiates; yet, at the same time he kept an eye on the political horizon for the man who would take the reigns of the state and save it, a task which had tragically eluded his first imperial patron, the betrayed Romanos IV Diogenes.

In this period of perpetual military crisis, Attaleiates also sought properly to organize his assets in an effort to guarantee for his son Theodore the safest possible future. This process was not unrelated to his interest in politics and the contacts he appears to have maintained with the aristocratic family of the Komnenoi. In fact even as he wove in the *History* a carefully constructed encomium to Botaneiates, offering underhanded

praise to the emperor while embedding in the same lines an elaborate critique of his policies, Attaleiates also developed the first-known panegyric to the man who as emperor was to indeed save the empire. Alexios Komnenos, the head of the empire's military forces, entrusted by Botaneiates with the task of defeating all threats to his reign, becomes the hero of the *History's* last pages. Attaleiates' flirtation with the idea of Alexios as the savior of the polity is carefully outlined in the *History*. Like a propaganda campaign designed to alert the audience of a coming policy change through carefully placed editorials, timely organized conferences on the issue at hand, and conveniently timed media leaks of classified information, Attaleiates slowly prepared the reader for an event that is not described in the *History*, yet takes place very soon after its first readers flip its last page.

Years of classical training and a career in the Byzantine court had accustomed Attaleiates to the arts of Aesopian writing and safe critique. Even as he praised Botaneiates, who rewarded him for his loyalty, he was signaling to the Komnenoi that he was to be their man in the approaching power contest. As with the more historical part of his writings, Attaleiates followed a simple recipe in the construction of his encomium to Botaneiates. He offered the emperor all the flowery adjectives bound to attract his attention, while soberly piling up the facts that constituted Alexios Komnenos' praise. To make things more interesting, he did that not just in the pages of his book but also in the words of praise he addressed to the emperor in the presence of the full complement of the senate. After Alexios Komnenos returned victorious from his campaign against the usurper Nikephoros Bryennios in 1077, Attaleiates composed and delivered an oration in honor of the victorious emperor and his right-hand man, who did the actual fighting. We can easily reconstruct the scene in the imperial halls; the senate assembled before the emperor's throne to hear Attaleiates' account of the events. A decade after his promotion to the rank of *patrikios* by the warrior emperor Romanos Diogenes in the less than ceremonial space of the army's muster station, the judge was back at center stage, only this time as the conductor of praise. The oration he offered has echoes in the *History*, which most likely used parts to relay the events of Botaneiates' reign. Here, we have the senate, the emperor, and his general in a great imperial hall arranged in a way that amplified the effects of Attaleiates' words. Every adjective of praise addressed to the emperor heightened the dissonance between the image of an old man sitting on the throne and the military

successes attributed to him. Every time the words “strong,” “intelligent,” and “martial” rung in the hall, one saw a placid old man with gray hair and wrinkly face sitting at the most prominent place in the room. In contrast, Attaleiates’ references to the triumphant general, the agent of Botaneiates’ success rung true, as the crowd attending the ceremony turned its eyes to the young and vigorous Komnenos.¹

In charting the basis for Attaleiates’ relationship with the Komnenoi, it is fruitful to follow the money. As with modern newspaper editorials promoting one or another political, social, or cultural goal, we are bound to ask if there is evidence of a possible quid pro quo. In our case, it seems that such evidence lies hidden in plain sight in Attaleiates’ monastic charter. The text with which the judge sought to organize the social and economic life of the estates placed under his monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon offers evidence, a smoking gun if you wish, for a Komnenoi–Attaleiates relationship. In the list of properties attached to the monastery, Attaleiates records an estate known as Monokellion. This plot of land once belonged to the nun Xene Komnene, a member of the Komnenian circle. Xene was in fact the name that Theodora Komnene, the sister of Alexios, assumed after the death of her husband Konstantinos Diogenes (died 1074), the son of Romanos Diogenes. Attaleiates’ monastery received the estate after a donation on the part of Xene, approved by her mother Anna Dalassene, the grand matriarch of the Komnenoi clan.

Anna Dalassene is known to readers’ of Anna Komnene’s *Alexiad* as the pillar of the Komnenoi. She was, however, also a staunch supporter of Romanos Diogenes, the man who had given wings to Attaleiates’ career. Other historians record that when Anna’s son Manuel died and there was no Komnenos to fight for the empire next to the emperor, Anna sent the fifteen-year-old Alexios to Romanos, who was at the time preparing to head out for his Mantzikert campaign. Romanos returned the boy to his mother thanking her for her family’s commitment and ensuring that she would not have to suffer the loss of yet another son.² Shortly after, Anna was tried and exiled by Michael VII’s regime for being in contact with Romanos’ during the latter’s futile attempt to regain the throne that the Doukas family had usurped while he was held captive by the Sultan Alp Arslan. Attaleiates’ monastery received those Komnenian benefactions at a time after the founder’s death. Yet, the association of the Komnenoi with the Panoiktirmon complex points to relationships that require scrutiny. Apart from this piece of land, it

appears that the monastery received after Attaleiates' death silver objects from Manuel Boutoumites, a military commander and Komnenos loyalist. In fact already before the reign of Botaneiates, Attaleiates ensured that the names of Xene, Anna, and of the deceased Konstantinos Diogenes would be commemorated in his monastery. In both Raidestos and Constantinople, on Attaleiates' property, the memory of a Diogenes and that of the Komnenoi was celebrated.³ There could be no clearer statement of loyalty but also no less ambiguous evidence that Attaleiates saw in the Komnenoi the future of the empire.

It would not be idle speculation to attempt a reconstruction of the conditions under which Attaleiates' relationship to the Komnenoi began. The opportunities for interactions between the judge and members of the family would have been numerous and most likely started when under the command of Romanos IV Diogenes, Alexios' brother Manuel found himself in the emperor's campaign tent, alongside Attaleiates. The high-ranking commander likely interacted with the military judge in the long hours of military meetings and strategy sessions. It is even probable that Manuel witnessed Attaleiates moment of candor, when in 1069 the judge was asked to express his opinion before Romanos' chiefs of staff. We know from Attaleiates himself that he had personally conversed with the emperor who had described for him past campaigns. Similar moments of storytelling and socializing likely involved Manuel Komnenos and later his brother Alexios. It is in fact conceivable that Attaleiates' backhanded praise of Botaneiates with its factual component of solid pro-Komnenos narrative was produced at the instigation of Alexios Komnenos, who could use Attaleiates' work as a medium for the presentation of the Komnenian message at court. The money trail lends a certain degree of credence to such suspicions. Like a modern pundit, Attaleiates used history and oratory to prepare the ground for the rise of the Komnenoi even as he ostensibly praised the reigning emperor.

The Komnenoi were the future and Attaleiates bet on them. He was not, however, a man to leave things to chance, and he took concrete measures to ensure that his son Theodore would be well provided with. Central to his strategy was the foundation of the monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon. With the *Diataxis*, Attaleiates placed a significant part of his fortune under the nominal control of the monastery. And yet only part of the revenue from the monastery's holdings, roughly one-third, was tied to its operational costs. The remainder was to remain in Theodore's hands to be used as he saw fit. In short what to the eyes of

a casual observer looked like an expression of piety, proved upon closer inspection to be a carefully orchestrated scheme leading to the creation of a haven for the revenues of the Attaleiatai.⁴

The Emperor Nikephoros Botaneiates, who rewarded Attaleiates with a number of honorary titles tied to significant income streams, understood well the judge's financial strategy and was happy to assist him in that. His thinking is registered on the imperial decree attached at the very end of the *Diataxis* that outlines the exemptions and preferential treatment granted to Attaleiates' land. In the preface to his decree Botaneiates, or perhaps the clerk preparing the decree on the emperor's behalf notes:

even a solid [edifice] often needs a support, so that it may become stronger. For example, sometimes we support a trench with walls and encircle a city with a double circuit wall, and this procedure is not incompatible with [the concern for] perfection. Therefore the *magistros* has resolved on this circumspect and shrewd [procedure]. He decided to approach our majesty for confirmation, since he knew that an imperial decree which confirms [a previous] decree has even greater weight.⁵

This statement suggests that the imperial chancery and perhaps the emperor himself scrutinized and carefully read the texts and ideas put forward by courtiers like Attaleiates. Imperial decrees like the one excerpted here were not simply legal texts, lists of privileges, and bureaucratic clauses. The rhetoric embedded in them was part of the formalized communication between emperor and subject. Botaneiates recognized here the basic parameters of Attaleiates' family strategy. He understood that the monastery was a way to protect his property from the state's tax officials. He also approved of the prudent quest for renewal of older concessions. On a deeper level, the emperor was aware of Attaleiates' fascination with military history and couched his recognition of his subject's desire for security in the language of military preparedness, which as a military man, albeit an old and retired one, he had digested well. Security then was Attaleiates' central concern at a time when everything but his booming career seemed to be in flux, mostly pointing toward crisis and demise.

Attaleiates' desire to secure his career and his family's future is also reflected in legislation he helped prepare during Botaneiates' reign. His legal initiatives dealt with the status of imperial advisors in times

of political instability and more specifically in the aftermath of regime change. One of the concerns in the minds of bureaucrats seeking to advance their careers was the interesting catch twenty-two they faced as they sought the necessary courtly connections to promote their personal interests. Any significant promotion and increase in influence was invariably linked with a person higher up in the administration who had connections to the inner circle around the reigning emperor. Even if your promotion was earned through sheer administrative competence, in the eyes of the other members of the political establishment you were automatically the client of your benefactor and patron; you were in effect “owned” by your superior. This was not a peculiarly Byzantine phenomenon. To our days, party affiliations often taint people’s perceptions of a functionary’s allegiances and career. The idea of a civil service above and beyond political contests and confrontations is a very modern notion and remains a utopian dream for most countries and societies around the world.

In Romanía, this reality was a recognized part of courtly life, and yet, it undeniably fostered a feeling of insecurity among the most ambitious of courtiers. Even in times of political stability, the court would be a competitive and even dangerous environment. A case in point, the prototypical Byzantine courtier, Michael Psellos, who faced a fair share of ups and downs in the course of a long and successful career. In the 1050s, he was forced to join a monastery for a number of months to silence his enemies at court.⁶ He returned to court a few months later, yet he had to wear the monastic garb for the rest of his life simply to keep up appearances. Then, after the early stages of Michael VII’s reign, despite his role in guaranteeing his student’s hold on the throne and his participation in the plot to depose Romanos Diogenes, Psellos found himself marginalized, with the influence of the eunuch Nikephoritzes on the rise. If a consummate politician like Psellos could suffer marginalization and even expulsion from courtly life under administrations that were otherwise friendly toward him, then things could turn rather hairy in periods of political upheaval, like the one that opened with the deposition of Romanos. Michael Doukas’ reign faced a number of rebellions, while Botaneiates’ time in power was hardly more peaceful. It is therefore telling that in this same period of heightened instability Attaleiates lobbied Nikephoros for legislation that would bind emperors’ hands and would impose on them a more sober treatment of the members of the bureaucracy.

Two laws, which Attaleiates discusses in detail in the *History*, were enacted at that time explicitly aiming to make the political field safer for imperial advisors and bureaucrats engaged in policy-making. One was but a reassertion of an old Theodosian stipulation according to which an emperor should provide a period of thirty days between the pronouncement of the court verdict against a political enemy and the execution of the court's orders.⁷ The purpose of the law was simple enough. It sought to avoid violence liable to occur in the heat of the moment and provide a period of appeal during which the fate of a condemned man could be decided through pleading, patronal relations, and the slow deliberation of the courts. Next to this piece of legislation, Attaleiates discusses another law with which Botaneiates secured the inviolability of a deposed emperor's advisors from retributive actions on the part of the new emperor. While such laws would certainly do little to stay the hand of a ruler committed to violence, they still indicated a belief on the part of Attaleiates in the power of the law. He seemed convinced that the law, when put in writing with the signature of an emperor and the approval of the senate of the Romans, could be a powerful force that constrained a ruler within certain boundaries of civility not to say humanity. Laws protecting bureaucrats and imperial decrees assuring the tax-immunity of personal property were all, in Attaleiates' mind, safeguards set up against potentially arbitrary actions on the part of the emperor.

THE MONASTERY AS A CENTER OF PATRONAGE

If laws to some degree shielded Attaleiates from social and political death, concrete measures, such as the cloaking of his properties by the protective umbrella of the Panoiktirmon monastery, sought to secure his family's continued prominence. There is an interesting parallel between the monastery and its organization, as understood by Attaleiates, and the structure of the state. The judge was the head of his own domain, much like the emperor was head of the state. At the same time, like the emperor, who though a secular leader, retained the right to directly intervene in ecclesiastical affairs, Attaleiates guaranteed that though monks and clergy were involved in the business of the monastery, it was himself and his son who had the final say on its operations. There was no abbot and no outside authority to intervene for as long as the members of Attaleiates' family were there to claim control of the monastery's incomes.⁸ The structure of the monastery itself mirrored Romania's

bureaucracy, the monks being eunuchs trained in arithmetic, accounting, and the law. Reading the *Diataxis*' stipulations, one gets a sense that Attaleiates wished to recruit men who had, at least to some extent, shared his experience of service to the state. Those men, with their secretarial and scribal skills, were also likely involved in the recording and even development of Attaleiates' intellectual projects. It is probable that the paper copy of the *History*, registered in the monastery's library collection, was a product of the Panoiktirmon's scriptorium, paper being a material used in the bureaucracy and ideal for the cheaper and faster dissemination of texts. In fact, the man whom Attaleiates entrusted with the task of administering the monastery's finances was also likely involved with the monastic scriptorium. Bearing the founder's name, Michael fulfilled successfully the task of *oikonomos* and eventually, once Attaleiates' son died, became abbot of the monastery and participated in important ecclesiastical events of Alexios Komnenos' reign. His religious functions aside, Michael was an able copyist, likely involved in the copying of Flavius Josephus' accounts of the fall of Jerusalem, a historical text also included in Attaleiates' monastic library.⁹ Since the monastery operated a scriptorium, quite possibly, already from the founder's time, we need to look at the copying activities of this institution as yet another possible source of income for the Attaleiatai.

The monastery also functioned as a retirement home for men with whom the judge had developed a lifelong relationship. Thus, Ioannes, Attaleiates' spiritual father, was offered a position in the monastery with a comfortable salary, cell, and meals. As we run through the pages of the *Diataxis*, an interesting outline emerges of this institution's social composition. Attaleiates offers clear instructions regarding the recruitment and compensation of the people living on his property. Seven monks were to be inducted in this monastery, the number being according to the founder a mystical, "virginal" number, the only one which can neither "give birth nor be born." Among those monks, Attaleiates includes the steward (*oikonomos*) of the monastery and the gatekeeper. We are also told that at the time when the charter was compiled Attaleiates did not think the resources of the monastery adequate for the maintenance of all seven men. He had therefore only taken in five.

One of the reasons why it had proved difficult to recruit all seven of the monks stipulated in the *typikon* may have been Attaleiates' desire to keep his monastery staffed with "high quality" persons. These men were recruited from among the notaries, accountants, and lawyers of the

capital or even, conceivably of Raideustos. Given their professional background, they would have expected slightly more than the tough regiment of strict monastic institutions. Attaleiates' rule may thus ban parties and celebrations that would detract from the seriousness of the monastery's operation, yet at the same time maintained a comfortable lifestyle for those living within the foundation's walls. If a poor Byzantine laborer would have to make do with a salary of four or five gold coins a year from which he had to eek out a precarious existence for himself and his family, Attaleiates' monks were instead rather well fed. According to the *Diataxis*, the crew of the Panoiktirmon received according to rank:

- a. The superior: twelve *nomismata*, forty-eight *modioi* of wheat, and thirty-six measures of wine
- b. The officials: eight *nomismata*, thirty *modioi*, and twenty-four measures of wine each
- c. The priests: seven *nomismata*, thirty *modioi*, and twenty-four measures of wine each
- d. The others: six *nomismata*, thirty *modioi*, and twenty-four measures of wine each

Furthermore, each monk would receive three extra *modioi* of wheat to distribute over the year at the monastery's gate. There were an additional three *nomismata* for the superior and two apiece for the others, earmarked for unspecified needs, while the crew also received three *modioi* of legumes and one *nomisma* each for oil. Once more, the superior appears to be doing slightly better than the others receiving two *nomismata*.¹⁰

The quantities prescribed make for a respectable diet and raise an important question regarding the role of salaries in the context of monastic life. If the monastery's lands covered the monk's yearly needs in food and wine, then what was the function of the salary that topped up their daily rations? What were Attaleiates' expectations regarding the interaction of those men with the outside world? It is in fact rather ironic that Attaleiates constructed a leisurely monastic retreat, given the opinions he harbored and openly expressed in the *History* on the issue of monastic life. In that very different context, he had noted that by despoiling monasteries of their wealth emperor Isaakios Komnenos offered the monks the opportunity to live a life of true ascetic privation. Somehow, twenty years later that was clearly not the case with the monks living in his institution.¹¹

The thirty *modioi* of wheat stipulated by the *Diataxis* corresponded to roughly 320 kilos of wheat per year (13.667 liters per *modios*, 0.78 kilos of wheat per liter). Given medieval levels of consumption, which ranged around two pounds of bread per person in the western part of Europe (218 kilos of wheat per year), we clearly see that Attaleiates' monks were reasonably provisioned, the monastery furnishing them with healthy portions of bread. To this quantity, we must add the provision of legumes, of oil, and of money to be used for supplementing the diet of the monks. Thus, the two *nomismata* offered for the procurement of the rest of their food were more than adequate for the purchase of fish, meats, and all manner of other goods from the capital's market. Though there is no surviving document from Attaleiates' monastery, precisely regulating diet, we can be sure that the monks in this establishment had to fast for a significant number of days of the year, thus ensuring that the already adequate supply of provisions was stretched over the longest possible amount of time.¹²

The monks' diet as vaguely outlined in the *Diataxis* had very significant social implications. On the one hand, it linked the "Holy Men" to the tenants on Attaleiates' lands who produced the wheat necessary for their daily bread, thus guaranteeing that the monks retained an interest in the perpetuation of the tenancy regime. This offered Attaleiates' family better control over its estate and easier extraction of the revenues that would fund its social, political, and economic aspirations. It was in the interest of the monks to protect the monastery and its property, while using their clout to support Attaleiates and his heir in their effort to shield the property from external challenges. Yet even as the quest for the daily bread reinforced the links between the patron and his crew of holy men, the realities of provisioning ensured the exposure of the monks to the Constantinopolitan market, which they needed to visit in order to procure the comestibles that featured on their breakfast, lunch, and dinner plate. The metallic equivalent of roughly fourteen to twenty gold coins changed hands on a yearly basis in the markets located in the vicinity of the monastery. With daily transactions involving, over a period of a year, roughly five and a half thousand copper *folleis*, the Byzantine coin of day-to-day transactions, Attaleiates' monks embedded themselves in the economy of southwestern Constantinople.

Alongside the dietary needs of the monastery's residents, there were also the provisions distributed by the monks to the needy residents of the Psamatheia neighborhood. At the door of the monastery, each

monk dispensed over a year the equivalent of three gold coins in bread. Personal relationships between Attaleiates' holy men and the neighborhood poor were carved on loaves of bread. A number of families were thus "tied" to the monastic economy, drawing a more or less significant portion of their yearly sustenance from the hands of the monks. Much like the doorstep of an ancient patrician household, operating as the point of interaction between the wealthy patron and his clients, the gate leading into the courtyard of the Panoiktirmon was a space where Attaleiates' monks acted as guardians of the sacred bonds linking the courtier to the society around him.

To the alms distributed at the door of the monastery, one must add the grants dispensed within the walls of the poorhouse at Raigestos to eighteen beneficiaries who received 136 liters of wheat each per year.¹³ While we know little regarding the composition of this group of people, Attaleiates opens a window of interpretation with his discussion of the pension to be paid to the servants of his monks. The reference to servants in itself confirms our original suspicion that the men entering the monastery were not commoners, but rather people of some substance. It is quite understandable that someone like Michael the steward of the monastery, seriously engaged in the task of copying manuscripts for the long of the day, enjoyed the assistance of his own servants in the performance of his other monastic duties. According to the *Diataxis*, those servants, should they be deemed worthy of it, were to enjoy the benefits of a pension from the monastery, which in fact was tantamount to their induction among the group of individuals receiving food subsidies from the Panoiktirmon's monks. This in itself raises questions regarding the social footprint of the monastery. One is compelled to ask how many servants were part of this monastic dole and how many of the monastery's supported poor were not in fact members of the households of the Panoiktirmon's holy crew. The relationship between the servants and the monastery, and by extension Attaleiates' family is fascinating as it highlights the circle of influence and alliances radiating from his household. The judge seemed intent upon keeping the households of his monks within the orbit of his family's relations. By allowing, though not demanding, the transfer to the monastery of properties belonging to his monks and then facilitating the induction of their servants in his institution, Attaleiates expanded the material basis on which the provisioning of the monastery depended, while at the same time guaranteeing the recycling of the monastery's resources among men loyal to his family.

On a practical level, one has to ask whether those servants were domiciled in the monastery itself, or whether they were present only during certain hours of the day, spending the rest of their time in their own homes. Attaleiates' concern about the servants may have stemmed from the nature of the men he was recruiting for his monastery. It is conceivable that the eunuchs of the Panoiktirmon were faced upon retirement in Attaleiates' institution with the extinction of their household. Not having children to leave their property to, they would essentially be leaving their servants in the cold upon their death. By providing for their servants, Attaleiates essentially recognized this reality and ensured that no hardship would befall men who had dedicated their lives to loyally serving their masters.

It appears then that more than a philanthropic venture aimed at reinforcing Attaleiates' ties with the divine, the monastery operated as a formal pension scheme for men whose services Attaleiates had come to rely on over the years. The Monk Anthony, his namesake, the ecclesiarch Anthony, and the steward Michael were all men close to his heart. So was the *praipositos* Ioannes, Attaleiates' secretary, who was also numbered among the monastery's donors. As for the rest of his holy crew, they were all to be recruited from among notaries, lawyers, and accountants, whom Attaleiates would have known through his many years as a member of the courts of justice. One might even wonder whether it was in effect paralegals and lower level bureaucrats from Constantinople's courts and the imperial palace that the Panoiktirmon sought to house. The suggestion makes some sense.

The importance of the monastery's function as an interface between Attaleiates and his son, on the one hand, and the society around them, on the other, is best seen in the instructions Attaleiates left regarding the role of the monastery's steward, the Monk Michael, who was evidently a man he truly trusted. Michael was an intellectual with very similar interests to those of Attaleiates himself. He was clearly instructed to operate as an agent of the Attaleiatai, ensuring that at any moment he would do the bidding of Attaleiates' "beloved son and heir in all things."¹⁴ For that, Michael was given a higher salary than the others as well as greater provision of wheat and wine. Michael's management of the monastery's economic and philanthropic activities was defined as a task pleasing to his patron. Everything that the monastery was achieving at the social level was for the benefit of its owners.

One could speculate on the issue of Attaleiates' social connections, and as we saw above, there is compelling evidence of his links to the aristocratic Komnenoi. One of the central duties of the steward Michael was therefore the proper celebration of the memory of Konstantinos Diogenes, his wife Theodora and of Anna Dalassene herself. Significantly, those individuals were to be commemorated on the same days when Attaleiates celebrated the memory of his parents, his two wives, and two other men, Basileios and Leon. While Leon remains unidentifiable, Basileios could very well be Attaleiates' close friend Maleses.¹⁵ Attaleiates' household advertised to everyone in Constantinople its loyalty to the Komnenoi by celebrating the memory of certain among them on the same day that the neighborhood remembered the patrons of their local monastery.

In a small church on the southwestern side of the Queen of Cities, every Saturday, the local inhabitants gathered in expectation of alms and favors from their local senator. Attaleiates frequented the imperial court. He was a man often in the presence of the emperor and a judge with influence in Constantinople's legal apparatus. If one needed advise on legal issues or maybe even hoped to gain access to some of the palace's movers and shakers, that person would conceivably come to him seeking assistance. Much like Michael Psellos writing letters to officials and directly contacting the emperor on behalf of his friends and, dare I say clients, Attaleiates would have created a circle of people who relied on his influence, courtly connections, and wealth. All those coming to visit would have the opportunity to attend mass and in the course of the religious ceremony be given a short primer on their patron's friends and connections. The names of Basileios Maleses, of select Komnenoi, with the matriarch of the family Anna Dalassene most prominent among them, and of a dead military hero, Konstantinos Diogenes, son of the betrayed emperor Romanos, along with those of Attaleiates' family filled the church in the chanting voice of the judge's own priests.¹⁶

Next to the senator stood the next generation, his son Theodore, an imperial notary and *disbypatos*, yet another man in expensive courtly finery, the person to whom Attaleiates had entrusted the administration of the monastery. Two generations of courtly influence now joined this pious congregation in prayer. The future of the Attaleiates family stood before the congregants next to the successful father, conceivably accompanied by his own group of friends from the court and from among the world of the imperial administration. The scene would in no-way have

been peculiar to the Attaleiatai. All around the capital, in hundreds of small or larger churches, some privately owned like Attaleiates', others not, the city's upper class congregated and in similar ceremonies reconstructed within what was often privatized sacred space, myriad networks of localized influence that connected in an informal fashion the world of the court with the population of the city. The needs, desires, and concerns of the city's population worked their way up to the desks of the emperor's officials through the oblique highway of patron-client relations and neighborhood influence grids.

As this diverse congregation entered the Church of Saint John the Forerunner in the Panoiktirmon monastic complex, their field of vision was filled with evidence of Attaleiates' taste and spiritual sensitivity. In a straight line from the entry, they could see the altar cover, a green silk fabric with decorations of young horses and double-headed lions. On the altar stood a silver-gilt chalice. Next to it was a paten on which to place the Eucharist Host, a spoon and a number of other implements essential for communion. Frequent visitors to Attaleiates' church would have noted that the paten and chalice were part of a set that used to belong to the Monk Romanos, who had them inscribed with a call for divine assistance. Attaleiates had evidently not procured custom-made liturgical objects but rather chose to shop from Constantinople's well-developed market for secondhand church plate and ecclesiastical accouterments. Incense rose toward the church's ceiling from a silver censer in the shape of a rider on horseback, an apt image for a church belonging to a man with a history of service in the army, well connected to the empire's military class. The doors separating the holy of holies from the rest of the church were decorated with silver capitals bearing the images of Christ and the Mother of God, while the columns of the doors on the *templon* were made of material similar to the one on the altar cloth, reinforcing the equestrian theme in the decoration of the church.¹⁷ Before the *templon* stood at least one icon of St John the Forerunner. Attaleiates' monastery possessed two of those, one unframed made of wood and one crafted out of bronze with a silver-gilt frame. The latter was dedicated to the monastery by Attaleiates' secretary, the *praipositos* Ioannes. This same man had also offered two silk cloths: one in two shades of purple decorated with peacocks, pistachio colored borders, and lining; one of brilliant white with vine tendril decorations. On feast days, the latter was supposed to be used as a cover for the head of St. John and the former to hang below the icon. On regular days, a less expensive curtain covered this icon.

The Church of St. John the Forerunner and the Panoiktirmon monastery physically attached to it were linked to the founder's poorhouse in Raidestos and enjoyed revenues from Attaleiates' properties in Thrace. In a sense, the monastery was part of a network of spaces on which it cast a shadow of sanctity. On occasion, the properties themselves owned by the monastery were sources of sanctity. Thus, on the estate of Phletra there was according to Nikephoros Botaneiates' scribes, who registered this emperor's grant of immunity to Attaleiates' monastery, a miraculous spring. It would be surprising if Attaleiates, or members of his household did not transfer water from this spring to the church in the capital, where it would surely make for extra-strength holy water. The reference to the spring in the imperial document granted to Attaleiates showed awareness on the part of the emperor and his men, of Attaleiates' claim on this holy spot.¹⁸

Attaleiates was not a member of the empire's class of superrich estate holders. He did not belong to the military aristocracy of the provinces, a class that could mobilize large personal retinues and challenge the authority of emperors. The power and influence of the Komnenoi and their allies was of a wholly different scale, when compared to that of men of Attaleiates stature. That said Attaleiates' imprint on the social landscape of the capital was not insignificant. While there were only a few families like the Komnenoi, who could by themselves raise the standard of rebellion in a distant province and fight their way to the throne of the Romans, there were hundreds if not thousands of men like Attaleiates represented in the Constantinopolitan senate. Such men dotted the map of the capital and the provinces with their households, estates, and other holdings and built extensive networks of patronage and economic as well as social interdependence on the empire's lands. It is a tribute to these men and their aspirations that we thus read Attaleiates' life and study his social and economic strategies.

NOTES

1. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 532–33, Bekker 292.
2. Nikephoros Bryennios, *Material for a History* I.12 in Paul Gautier (ed. and trans.), *Nicéphore Bryennios, Histoire* (Bruxelles: Byzantion, 1975), p. 105, lines 1–16.
3. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 360.
4. Paul Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XI^e siècle byzantin* (Paris, 1977), pp. 65–113 here 110–11.

5. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 364.
6. Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters*, pp. 3–10 for a short biography of Psellos.
7. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 569–81, Bekker 312–19 on Botaneiates' legal work; Ludwig Burgmann, "A Law for Emperors: Observations on a Chrysobull of Nikephoros III Botaneiates," in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium*, ed. Paul Magdalino (London: Ashgate-Variorum, 1994), pp. 247–58, esp. pp. 253 and 256.
8. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, pp. 345–46.
9. Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline*, p. 32, note 128 on said Michael.
10. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 350.
11. Attaleiates, *History*, pp. 111–15, Bekker 61–63.
12. "The Regulation of Diet in the Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents," in John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero (ed.), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founder's Typika and Testaments* (Washington, 2000), pp. 1696–716.
13. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 353.
14. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 353.
15. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 360.
16. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, pp. 349, 360 on Anna and Konstantinos, p. 360 for Xene.
17. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 357 for all this material as listed in inventory 6.
18. Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, p. 367.



CHAPTER 12

Culture Wars and a Judge's Roman Piety

Sometime in the middle of the eleventh century, Michael Psellos sent the metropolitan of Chalkedon a gift. It was a religious icon painted on wood, apparently not one of significant monetary value. The recipient somehow failed to appreciate it and so in a letter to him, Psellos expressed his frustration with his rejection of the gift. Psellos being Psellos did not leave things at that and developed his own thoughts on religious icons:

On your holy soul, I actually rob them from churches. Indeed, I have stolen many from sanctuaries and at first I escaped everyone's notice, Leaving with them clasped in my arms, but later on, when I came under suspicion, I immediately denied it on oath. But I have clung on to those faint pictures, because they represent the painter's art. I have a collection of such boards, mostly without gold or silver, resembling some of the new senators, who have neither crosses nor robes. Yet I do not suffer when I give them away.¹

This letter has received the attention of scholars, who have used it to discuss Byzantine attitudes toward art.² Here we have an art lover offering evidence that individuals were in possession of small collections of icons. We also have clear attestation of the exchange of religious icons as private gifts. And yet there is also another issue emerging from this letter. Here a medieval Roman, ostensibly a Christian, unabashedly admits in an epistle to a leader of the Church that he steals religious icons from churches

and, what is more, when confronted with people's suspicions, is ready to lie about his temple robbing under oath. In Psellos' letter, the sacred icon is no longer a conduit to God's truth but an object of aesthetic appreciation and desire, the act of stealing is now a means to a beautiful end, and the most holy oath, but a pragmatic get-out-of-jail card. In this new order of meaning earthly beauty and the art of the human creator stand above sin, truth, and holiness.

Psellos is similarly, if not so obviously, transgressive in his account of the virtuoso orator, the Monk Ioannes Kroustoulas.³ In this text, Psellos' focus is on the rhetorical brilliance of one of Constantinople's star orators. The stage for Ioannes' performance is the Church of Holy Soros and his audience is tightly packed in the building. Having described Ioannes' skill, mode of delivery, and rhetorical persona in detail, Psellos also notes that

no one among those present has come here (to say something rather bold) for the sake of spiritual grace or to reap spiritual fruits. Rather, they have come for this man that you see reading, offering pleasure. Just like someone who enters a meadow in bloom and sees there many and different flowers and fruits is delighted in his soul, often leaps with joy, and picks some of these, so also do we.⁴

Here we find ourselves in God's own house, before a large congregation of Christians, of whom not one—at least on this occasion—was in the business of spiritual edification and growth. Psellos admits that his statement was rather bold, yet nevertheless goes on to claim that his fellow listeners were in it for entertainment and the sheer pleasure listening raptly at a good speech. Furthermore, their appreciation of Ioannes' rhetorical genius is likened to the entirely natural human reaction to earthly beauty.

Both vignettes are notable for implicating others in Psellos' transgressions. In his epistolary discussion of icons, the philosopher makes the bishop his accomplice and assumes that the man of God would do nothing to expose his interlocutor. In the praise of Ioannes Kroustoulas, a whole gaggle of Constantinopolitans, both savants and commoners, join Psellos in a purely aesthetic experience, shedding any pretense of piety in their pursuit of pleasure. On both occasions the spiritual and the material, the holy and the simply beautiful are entangled in an unexpected dance.

We encountered a different version of this entanglement when discussing Attaleiates' monastery as the intersection of material, social, intellectual, and spiritual interests. Here we saw a constellation of temporal concerns mapped on the sacred geography of the judge's pious foundation. Care for family, colleagues, and clients appears to be guiding Attaleiates' language of piety. If piety, however, could be a means to temporal goals, if a church building could be the stage for scintillating rhetoric, valued strictly for its beauty and strength, and if a monastery was a vehicle for secular success and safety, then what of Attaleiates'—or for that matter Psellos'—actual faith? Such discussion of an individual's relationship with God and the Church must take place within the broader matrix of eleventh-century intellectual developments. In the fifty or so years from the death of Basileios II in 1025 to the crowing of Alexios I Komnenos in 1081, the Byzantines fought important "culture wars."⁵ In the middle of that century the very same Michael Psellos with whom we opened this chapter, at the time still going by his baptismal name Konstantinos, was accused of heresy and Hellenism by circles in the palace closely linked to the imperious patriarch Michael Keroularios.⁶

Impugning the faith of a public figure was another way of seeking his exclusion from the charmed circle of the court. Offering a member of the church a written confession to having stolen icons from churches for the sake of their aesthetic beauty was at the time but a minor one of Psellos' many infractions. In a world where the spiritual and the temporal were supposed to be neatly entangled, the emperor, God's lieutenant on earth, could not be seen spending time with men of dubious religious credentials. To counter the whisper campaign against him Psellos offered most public proof of his orthodox beliefs. In his case, there was no better way to establish his innocence than by joining his most ardent enemies, abandoning secular life, and retreating in a monastery. A few months later, having established his orthodox credentials, he was once again at court. Were one to raise questions, emperors could now point to the philosopher's black monastic frock as proof of his faith in Christ.

The case of Psellos is not a diversion from the discussion of Attaleiates' religious experience. The philosopher and his teachings lie at the very center of the eleventh-century "culture wars." Psellos' interest in nature, in the occult, omens, Platonic philosophy, Hellenic literature, erotic novels, and all things pagan amplified tensions that marked life in Romanía ever since Constantine joined the Roman state and Christianity in an indissoluble bond, imposing on the Church and its leaders an

uneasy accommodation with the intellectual universe of the elite, a universe steeped in classical learning. This long coexistence between classical aesthetics and wisdom on the one hand and Christian doctrine on the other had been made possible by figures such as the philosopher Origen (third century CE) and the bishop Basil of Caesarea (fourth century CE), who from early on alerted Christians to the value of the literary and philosophical production of the Greeks and the Romans.⁷ This coexistence, however, much like the relationship between science and religion in today's world, was not always smooth. In the sixth century, Prokopios had to carefully hide his paganism behind a screen of Christian piety, lest he lose favor with his mighty patron Belisarios and the emperor, the pious Justinian. In the early years of the tenth century, Leon Choïrosphaktes was less lucky, when his interests in astrology, all very well rationalized within a Christian intellectual context, proved adequate ammunition for his political enemies at court. Psellos could look back to those men and many others like them and reflect on the dangers faced by those pushing the boundaries of intellectual exploration.

In Psellos' mind, the main enemies of "rational" inquiry were those same men he was forced to join on the Bithynian Mount Olympus in order to save himself from his detractors: the monks, or as he often mockingly referred to them, the Naziraioi.⁸ Next to the monks one could add a whole new brand of spirituality, which was promoted at the time by the popular Niketas Stethatos, an influential monk at the monastery of Stoudios in Constantinople, occasional ally of populist anti-Latin agitator, the patriarch Michael Keroularios. Niketas and his hero, the deceased mystic Symeon the New Theologian, represented the opposite pole to Psellos' flamboyant intellectualism and confidence in human reason.

If Psellos was, in his own words, attracted to earthly concerns, Stethatos was a representative of a contemplative nearly disembodied human *praxis*.⁹ As far as Psellos was concerned the detached monk and his ilk was an insult to humanity and in his writings he made sure that his opponents knew about it. We should not, however, give into modern assumptions regarding Byzantine piety and assume that Symeon and Niketas were universally popular. Before Psellos ever wrote, Symeon had faced the scorn of Hellenists in both Church and public administration. His biographer, the fawning Niketas, unwittingly gives us a sense of existing divisions within the Orthodox community itself. The mystic's enemies were not in this case some godless cabal of secular humanists.

They were rather respected clergymen in positions of influence. One of them, the former metropolitan of Nikomedia and *synkellos* of the Great Church, Stephanos of Alexina was

a man superior to most in his speech and knowledge. He not only had great influence with the patriarch and the emperor but was also able to provide solutions with fluent speech and a supple tongue to anyone who asked about novel issues... Stephanos had a very high opinion of himself and looked down on everybody else, and so he apparently used to mock the saint's reputation and disparage those who spoke about Symeon's knowledge, calling the saint ignorant and an utter peasant, someone who was inarticulate and unable to even grunt when faced with wise men who knew how to make skillful arguments with words.¹⁰

Stethatos' account is fascinating in that it lays out a stark contrast between two visions of life. On the one hand, Stephanos is a man cut from a rhetor's cloth. He was at ease in the "company" of late antique pagans and surely read their works on oratory to develop his own diction and mind. His intellectual milieu was that of men like Psellos, Attaleiates, or Christophoros Mytilinaios. Symeon on the other hand, the otherworldly boor and hero of Stethatos' account, represents a vision of Orthodoxy that is still with us. Mystical and detached from this world—not unlike the Hesychast movement that followed on its heels two centuries later, this strand of Christianity was not dominant in Romanía. Psellos eloquently charted the existing intellectual rift in a scornful, impolitic letter he addressed to the patriarch Michael Keroularios at a time when the latter was being investigated by imperial authorities for sedition.

I often hold converse with books, and discover some of their contents by inquiring and drawing conclusions on the basis of commonly accepted principles, while the rest, as though I had engaged with the material myself, is conveyed to me by someone who is an expert, who possesses the educative art... Hence I thoroughly mastered some areas of philosophy; I purified my speech through the sophistic arts; I taught my students geometry, and was the first to institute it as a subject; I also discovered some of the principles of musical theory; I set straight not a few accounts of the motions that surround the sphere; I also made the science of our beliefs [Christianity] far more accurate than it had been previously; I expounded the teachings of theology; I disclosed the depth of allegory; and finally

– though may the bolt of malicious envy not strike me! – I made every science exact... But for you wisdom and theology proceed from different principles, of which we know nothing, nor are we even acquainted with them, unless of course you are referring to the “tablets of Zeus.” For you have neither philosophized, nor learned stereometry, nor ever studied books. Neither have you come across any wise men, whether Greeks or barbarians, nor any others, and to us you have plainly appeared to be, as you would say, absolute science-in-itself and wisdom-in-itself.¹¹

In this letter, Psellos lays out the fundamental differences between an intellectualized Christianity comfortably ensconced in and ever-nourished by the Greco-Roman cultural placenta on the one hand and the austere, quasi-ascetic, and anti-intellectual world of Roman mystics. The culture war outlined here was therefore not one between secularists and the faithful, as it is often cast in modern political analysis. The rift cut across the divide between laymen and people of the frock and was as old as the history of the Christian Roman Empire. As the most eloquent defender of this form of medieval humanism Psellos became a lightning rod for conservatives. In the same letter to Patriarch Michael Keroularios the philosopher explained: “that thing which I am, a logical nature with a body, I neither could alter or renounce even if I wanted to, nor would I want to, even if I could.” He then added “I was a lover of philosophy right from the start, while you were practicing those matters that are above us.”¹² Psellos finally complained that the leader of the church, who shunned his company, disparaged his eloquence and scorned true culture, also attempted to impose his lifestyle and opinions upon one who “was neither born for such a life nor has any inclination to pursue your art.”¹³

Psellos’ writings, with their ironic criticism of conservative patriarchs, monks, and their way of life, are therefore part of a longer tradition of anti-rigorist literature and action.¹⁴ His broadsides mostly come in the form of letters or poems, which were not necessarily always dispatched to their target but rather circulated among social peers, friends, and imperial patrons. Smart puns, elegant bile, and vicious retort were in fact part of the excitement of Romanía’s courtly and political life. How could a young man like Attaleiates not snicker when he came across Psellos’ attack of the Monk Sabbaites described among other things as “a tongue easily bent on blasphemy, a hand open to bribe, a foot swift on the path of murderous injury, a gut brimming with voraciousness, a

mind empty of thinking yet full of cunning.”¹⁵ And if this monk had evidently insulted Psellos, Jacob, another one from among God’s holy crew, had dared editorialize about the philosopher’s all-too-short stint among the monks on Mount Olympus. The offense did not go unpunished, it stirred into action Psellos’ cutting pen, which recorded that “with one sip you emptied ten cups (oh Jacob), breaking wind you filled a twenty measure wine-skin, all that remains, is that you gape your mouth and swallow the sea itself.”¹⁶

Psellos’ verses could turn a man into the laughing-stock of polite Constantinopolitan society, as much as his patronage could open doors. The Monk Elias was a friend of the philosopher with peculiarly earthly leanings. In many ways, he was not different from Jacob in his taste for taverns, banter, wine, and women. Psellos thought that Elias was amusing, unpretentious and, above all, good company. He had a talent for entertainment and Psellos’ friends were advised to open their homes to him. Elias, however, was very different from his biblical namesake, the Prophet Elija, and Psellos has a field day showing how his friend failed to ever rise toward the skies, burdened as he was with earthly concerns. In fact, Elias seems to almost come out of a latter day intellectual and artistic tradition, embodying the carnivalesque bawdiness of a Bruegel painting. His story is that of humanity celebrated in all its gorgeous yet also lurid details.¹⁷

Like Psellos and many other educated Romans, Attaleiates had a complicated relationship with the tenets of Orthodox Christianity and the representatives of Christ in the world of the living. From early on in life he tells us his mother had taught him the word of God and it is evident in his writings that he had digested the Scriptures and could speak of God in doctrinally correct fashion. His day-to-day life was also marked by numerous small instances of direct interaction with religious images and symbols, from the moment when he put on his signet ring with the picture of the Virgin Mary on it, to the more formal swearing of oaths at court and the occasional stop by the Church of St. John the Forerunner, which he essentially owned, on his homeward journey from work. He had also been married in church (twice), as had been customary for medieval Romans ever since the tenth-century Emperor Leon VI passed legislation obliging young couples to sanctify their contractually arranged union with the blessing of a priest.¹⁸ Then by the end of his life Attaleiates became the owner of a monastery and helped the poor of the city of Raideustos through a poorhouse that was directly linked

to this pious foundation. On a regular basis, he dealt with the monks of this establishment and men of God were part of his day-to-day routine. He was a judge, a man of the world living a secular life, yet he had more interactions with the realm of faith than even truly religious men or women would find occasion to have in our times.

Most importantly, there is some evidence that Attaleiates saw the divine as having a notable role in human affairs. When he narrated the story of Nikephoros II Phokas' conquest of Crete (961CE) in the *History*, Attaleiates wrote of a naval expedition, of war, sieges, decapitated Saracens, and yet at the very center of his piece, he placed a feat of piety. Standing among his troops outside the great Saracen fort of Handakas, modern-day Herakleion, Nikephoros gave a speech on the importance of piety. The Christian soldiers had to clearly display their dedication to God in order to be rewarded with victory. What better way to do so than build a church, described in detail by Attaleiates who had visited Crete and had seen the building and in it the murals of the saints, among them the Emperor Nikephoros himself.¹⁹ Here Attaleiates describes for his readers a rapport with God predicated upon reciprocal obligations. The Christians behave well and God rewards them. A similar understanding of the relationship between man and God emerges when he explains his motives for the foundation of his monastery.

I decided that it was necessary to give “a portion even to eight” “with a broken and humbled heart,” that is, to the future generation, thanking the all-merciful God who loves the good, because he brought me forth of pious and Christ-loving parents, who taught me the very great wisdom of knowledge of God, and then provided me with sufficient education, first a general curriculum, then philosophy and rhetoric, and the holy initiation into laws, and furthermore he deemed me worthy of sufficient wealth, gathering for me a most ample abundance of his earthly blessings.²⁰

Attaleiates deploys the language of reciprocity to explain his decision to link part of his fortune to a monastery and a poorhouse. At the end of his career, looking back to a life blessed with success, and thinking ahead to his son and his position in an increasingly precarious world, he notes that giving back, even what he conceived as but a small part of what he had received, was a matter of necessity. Christian piety is well displayed in this monastic document and would likely convince someone of the judge's sincere beliefs.

Attaleiates lived in a period of political upheaval, the empire's territories overrun by enemies even as the Roman elites fought bloody civil wars for control over the increasingly weak polity. Having been born in a period of affluence, Roman arms dominant on every frontier, and having lived through years of plenty, in a capital city brimming with the wealth of the Mediterranean, he sought various explanations for the miserable condition of the empire in the 1070s. Recourse to a theology of sin and divine persecution was appealing and at times Attaleiates developed in the *History* strands of arguments culminating in divine retribution. Yet the more one reads Attaleiates' text, the more the author reveals himself as a complex thinker, whom one would have difficulty categorizing as conventionally Christian.²¹ Attaleiates is pious and apparently believes in a very personal relationship with God yet in his writings he paints the divine in peculiar colors.

God in the *History* punishes the Byzantines for their treacherous and impious ways and even rewards the barbarians for remaining loyal to their own customs and being respectful of universal rules of humanity.²² Yet it is precisely at this point that Attaleiates' idea of the relationship between God and history becomes complicated. In his monastic charter, Attaleiates poses as the grateful founder of a monastery. He is at the receiving end of blessings for which he thanks God. Surprisingly, however, the blessings he enjoyed from the divine had very little to do with what he himself did in the course of his life to earn them. In fact, we may be surprised to read in the *Diataxis* that Attaleiates deemed himself a sinner, who had tested God's patience and expected torment and punishment in the afterlife.²³ Attaleiates' God is merciful and rewards him *despite* his many sins. Yet, this same God did not similarly treat the Romans of his times, who the judge claims, are collectively punished for their numerous sins. Such ethical lapses in God's plan for man had long been the object of analysis by Byzantine authors. Agathias outlined the problem in the sixth century when he noted that the great earthquakes that shook the empire's capital and provinces in his time had killed indiscriminately, the wrath of God falling in equal measure on the innocent and the guilty, the virtuous and the sinners.²⁴ Five centuries later, Psellos highlighted God's cruelty when he questioned the logic behind the death of his innocent young daughter, juxtaposing her fate to that of myriad sinners and criminals. Like Agathias, Psellos offered pious bromides in which to couch his devastating critique of an immoral God.²⁵

Ironically, when Attaleiates looked for men who had historically established a rewarding relationship with the Supreme Being, those turn out not be the Christians, but the Romans of antiquity. It is the great heroes of the Republic who were the most successful Romans in all history, and Attaleiates clearly traces their success to their piety. They were scrupulous in seeking to understand God's demands and when they occasionally failed in their political and military undertakings they sought to explain the causes of such failures through careful investigation. When they detected the act of impiety that caused them grief, those pagan Romans cleansed the camp and did all that was necessary to court divine favor. The story of ancient Roman piety could easily be treated as moralistic and instructive. His contemporaries like their ancestors must seek divine approbation and by doing so receive God's reward in the form of victories.

It is here, however, that Attaleiates' readers notice the complication in his argument. When reading chapters from the *History* to his friends, some among them would no doubt have asked: were not the Romans of the Republic pagans? Was their piety not that of a heathen? How did God reward pagan rituals and heathen practices? This question is fully justified and the reader of Attaleiates' more Christian sentences needs to consider it carefully. What did it mean that God rewarded piety irrespective of people's religious background? Why is it that the barbarians of their time and the Romans of antiquity received God's favor? Were not Attaleiates' Romans a new Israel, the new chosen people? Were not all other nations condemned to damnation? What is really going on here? There is in fact more that was surely confusing for Attaleiates' careful readers. In discussing Nikephoros Phokas' campaign to Crete, Attaleiates noted that the Romans were rewarded for their piety, which was kindled by the quasi-missionary efforts of the pious Nikephoros. Soon after this account, however, the *History* also notes that Nikephoros was murdered by his wife in collusion with his relative Ioannes Tzimiskes.²⁶ Somehow a man of God, a Christian warrior was murdered by his own wife and kin, and yet Attaleiates once again noted that this was God's will. Who was this God who was so capricious that he rewarded pagans and barbarians, had pious Christians killed, and at the same time so harshly punished Attaleiates' ethically compromised contemporaries?

One way to address this difficult question would be to invoke divine grace and bury the contradictions in God's attested interventions in a nebulous and well-used principle of Christian faith. Being a "medieval

soul” Attaleiates can be presumed to have uncritically accepted such tenets of the faith. And yet, such an approach to his thinking would be disrespectful, in view of his specific pronouncements on the issue of causation. Attaleiates explicitly states that he wrote history in order to find the causes of events. In his analysis, he sought human activities behind specific events and historical outcomes. His concern, much as in the case of Psellos, is with rational souls inhabiting Roman material bodies. As for the divine, when it appears in his text, it is often a non-descript, not recognizably Christian force. It is a supreme entity that seems to guide human affairs and produces often-incomprehensible outcomes. Attaleiates’ God is much closer to the idea of fortune and chance from ancient Greek literature, than the notion of a Christian Creator. There is evidence that his faith was in fact even more compromised. In the library of his own monastery, he kept a book on earthquakes and thunder, in effect a work on divination, that offered readings of signs in nature in quest of forecasts of the future. Such a book was surely not Christian in content. It stemmed from a long tradition of ancient divination that relied on oracles and on other forms of study of the natural world, which were often treated as heretical and outright demonic by the Church.

Moreover, it appears that Attaleiates’ fascination with the Romans of yore had a direct effect on his conception of the Roman polity and its relationship with the divine. When in the early years of the 1070s Attaleiates compiled a synopsis of Roman law for the Emperor Michael Doukas he framed Byzantine law in quasi-republican fashion. While the source for his work was the *Basilika*, which had stood at the center of the Roman legal system since the end of the ninth century, the manner of presentation employed by the judge was somewhat idiosyncratic.²⁷ The *Basilika* was a stereotypically Byzantine legal compilation and as such opened with a declaration of faith that clearly marked the boundaries of a Christian community of faith. As you turned to the first few pages of the *Basilika*, you encountered a form of *credo* that unambiguously conveyed the legislator’s view of the relationship between faith, justice, and the polity. When Attaleiates’ contemporaries and those scholars in the generations that came after him read past the opening pages of the *ponema nomikon* and its dedication to the emperor, they came face to face with a primer on the republican origins of Roman law. After seventy-seven lines of legal history, they stumbled upon the opening chapter on the definition of free and bound men and soon after they read about public and private property. The statement of faith that marked the first

page of the *Basilika* was relegated to the third chapter of Attaleiates' compilation, 173 lines and multiple pages after the opening page of the manuscript he dedicated to the emperor.

If a person's importance in the imperial *taxis* was precisely marked by his place on the floor before the emperor in the course of an imperial ceremony, an idea's place in a person's mind may similarly be reflected in the space that this idea is accorded in her books. Attaleiates' treatment of faith in his legal work is indicative of a person who deliberately subordinated orthodoxy to republican ideas about citizenship, personhood, and property rights. Furthermore, Attaleiates understood the Roman state to operate as an entity distinct from the Church. When he therefore described the relationship between Isaakios I Komnenos and the rather imperious patriarch Michael Keroularios, Attaleiates justified the emperor's attempt to circumscribe and in effect contain patriarchal authority. As far as he was concerned imperial authority deserved respect and a patriarch disrespecting an emperor was playing with fire. In fact, Attaleiates openly developed his ideas regarding the role of a patriarch in society when in describing the life and work of Keroularios' successor Konstantinos Leichoudes he argued that everyone loved him because he cared for the monks, the clergy, and the poor. That, in the judge's view, was the role of the head of the Orthodox community. It was distinct from the state and limited to the realm of a clearly circumscribed philanthropic Church. Even more telling of Attaleiates' ideas regarding the place of clerics in society was his comment on the fate of the deposed Emperor Michael VII Doukas whom the usurper Nikephoros Botaneiates tonsured and placed at the head of the bishopric of Ephesos. Attaleiates noted about this affair that the post was ideal for Michael who was naïve and unsuited to politics. In the mind of this historian then, the Church was a realm separate from the state and appropriate for an apolitical, simpler type of man.

That said what we have discussed above does not give us a clear sense of Attaleiates' actual beliefs. It speaks of his views on the Church, on piety, and on the relationship between Orthodoxy and the Roman polity, but it does not really touch upon his view of the divine. We already saw that Attaleiates' view of the role of God in human affairs differed in the various passages of his texts and from one text to the other. A close reading of the *History* in fact suggests that the divine for Attaleiates was a nebulous concept rather close to ancient Greek ideas of fortune.

In Attaleiates' world, much as in Psellos' work, people were the motive forces behind history. Only the judge, like many of his ancient counterparts, was well aware that people were never in full control of their fate. The unexpected always lurked and the person best prepared to deal with it was the type of man admired by Attaleiates. In that scheme of things the Christian God with his incoherent behavior, that punished the pious and the impious alike, was neither moral nor an adequate explanation for the developments one experienced in historical time. Theodicy and Divine Grace were not prisms through which this historian understood human life.

Conversations on medieval religious belief stumble inevitably upon modern notions of faith and our contemporary preconceptions about the belief systems of pagans, Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The study of Attaleiates' worldview indicates that things were in fact rather more complicated when it came to faith and the medieval Romans. His admiration of pagan piety indicates that though well read in the Christian foundational texts, he approached religion from a rather practical perspective. Like the pagan historian Polybios (second century BCE), who admired Rome for its manipulation of piety and its use of religion as a unifying force in society, Attaleiates seems to have viewed Christianity from a similar angle. The failures of Attaleiates' contemporaries were thus to be attributed not to sin, as this was understood in the framework of a theologically correct Christianity, but rather to their abandonment of proper religious practice and piety, both core components of citizenship. In that respect, Attaleiates was as Roman as his republican heroes, conceiving the role of religion in the state in much the same way. What if Christianity had supplanted Paganism? For Attaleiates the eternal questions of piety, respect for ancestral custom and investigation of the causes of divine displeasure applied to all ages. In a way none of this should come as a surprise to us. Recent work on authors from Prokopios, Agathias, and Ioannes Lydos to Psellos and Attaleiates himself suggests that the judge swam confidently in an established Byzantine intellectual current. Here reasoned discourse and careful assessment of causation flowed safely past the shoals of dogma and the rapids of inflexible faith. How different then, these Roman citizens, their minds, and the world they inhabited from the realm of theocratic tyranny and intellectual retardation projected onto Byzantium by Voltaire and his peers in the Age of Reason.

NOTES

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A Short Conclusion

With this direct challenge of our ideas regarding Christian faith in the eleventh century the portrait of a committed citizen, living a fully Roman life as an eclectic Christian is now completed. We will not delve here on Attaleiates' death, which remains a mystery. Scholars posit that both the judge and his son were likely dead by the mid-1080s. Prudence and planning did not protect them from age, disease, or perhaps politics. A few years later Attaleiates' rather nuanced Roman world would encounter a world of certainty, religious zeal, and dedication to strict definitions of orthodoxy (correct faith). The Catholic Christian knights and the accompanying clergy of the first Crusade had little of the readiness displayed by men of Attaleiates' class to seek synthesis in their views of the world. Those inflexible warriors were welcomed to Romanía by a new emperor, the bright and successful Alexios Komnenos whom Attaleiates had celebrated in his own work. Alexios himself made a pact with the rigorist forces in Romanía in order to secure his position on the throne. Early on in his reign, he tried Psellos' student, the philosopher Ioannes Italos, for impiety and thus nodded to the ultra-Orthodox camp of Niketas Stethatos' scions that he respected their thinking. Alexios' piety was as conspicuous as Attaleiates would have expected it to be. It was, however, no more than skin deep. Next to the new emperor stood astronomers like Symeon Seth. Even when Alexios exiled from Constantinople a number of astrologers, fearing, in the words of his daughter Anna, their effects on the Byzantine youth, he sent them away in comfortable retirement in the city of Raidestos. One wonders,

in fact, if it was in the mansion of the now deceased Attaleiates, a known Komnenos supporter, that these men were housed. With the arrival of the Crusade and the consolidation of the Komnenoi in power, a process that led to changes in the political organization of the Roman polity, the curtain falls on the eleventh century. Officials like Attaleiates still found a role in the management of the flamboyant Komnenian state, and yet no intellectual after Attaleiates was to display his confidence in the social position and role of his class in the Roman body politic. In the twelfth century, the sword was certainly mightier than the pen. Alexios was Attaleiates' hero, yet with this young Byzantine Scipio, Attaleiates' age comes to an end.

GLOSSARY

anthypatos: Greek rendering of the Roman office of pro-consul. By the eleventh century an anthypatos is a senior court dignity

charistikion: A form of private/public partnership focused on monastic assets, a *charistikion* was a contract between the Byzantine state and a private individual (*charistikarios*). Through this arrangement elite Byzantines assumed the management of a monastery's estates, invested in the monastery's spiritual life funds derived from said management, and pocketed the remaining surplus

doux: By Attaleiates' time, a *doux* was usually in command of one of the larger military districts that emerged mainly in newly conquered territories. The *domestikos* of the *scholai* (high commander of Romania's field armies) was also sometimes called a *doux*

droungarios: An officer in the thematic armies. Early on this was the commander of a *droungos* (a unit of 1000 men). Over the years, the number of men under this command gradually decreased. A *droungarios* also commanded the fleets at Constantinople and in Romania's maritime themes

epi ton deeseon: A legal official who collected petitions addressed to the emperor and was responsible for drafting responses to them

epi ton kriseon: An office created as part of Konstantinos Monomachos' legal reforms. It was likely instituted sometime between 1043 and 1047.

- Attaleiates explains in the *History* that the *epi ton kriseon* supervised the decisions of provincial courts
- indiction*: The Byzantines divided time into fifteen-year tax cycles. Each year of a particular cycle was a numbered indiction. Thus the ninth indiction was the ninth year of that cycle (of fifteen years). This was but one among a series of different dating systems available to the Byzantines
- kaisar*: From the Latin *Caesar*. By the eleventh century this title was mostly granted to royal heirs or other notable members of the imperial family
- katepano*: In the late tenth and eleventh centuries the *katepano* were governors of major military provinces such as Italy, Mesopotamia, Bulgaria, and the region of Antioch
- klasma*: Usually abandoned and uncultivated private land removed from the tax registers and assigned to new owners under diminished tax rates for a period of time, with an eye to eventual restoration of productivity and maximization of future tax revenues
- kleisoura*: A mountain pass and the district around it placed under the command of a *kleisourarches*, who was responsible for its defense. By the eleventh century, most *kleisourai* had been elevated to the status of *themata*
- krites* (pl. *kritai*): A state official with judicial but also administrative and fiscal duties. Not all *kritai* possessed legal expertise and training. In the tenth and eleventh centuries *kritai* emerge as chief administrators in provinces, which in the past had been managed by *strategoï*
- krites of the Hippodrome*: A career judge who held his tribunal at the covered Hippodrome
- krites of the army*: The *krites tou stratopedou* first appears in Attaleiates who held this office. The *History* suggests that this official dealt with disciplinary issues emerging in the course of a campaign. In a way, he was a manager of civilian-military relations
- krites of the velon*: A member of a twelve-member Constantinopolitan court which after the tenth century emerges as one of the empire's highest tribunals. The *kritai* of the *velon* may have acquired their name from the location of their court behind a large awning (*velum*) in the area of the covered Hippodrome
- logothetes*: Head of a government bureau. This title rose to prominence after the decline of the office of the praetorian prefect at the end of antiquity. A *logothetes* supervised the activities of his bureau the *logothesion*
- logothetes tou dromou*: The head of the bureau of the *dromos*. He was responsible for ceremonial the emperor's safety, intelligence

- operations, and foreign affairs. Some *logothetai tou dromou* assumed the role of first minister
- logothetes ton hydaton*: Title attested only in the *History* in relation to Basileios Malese. Scholars speculate that it was likely associated with the maintenance of Constantinople's aqueducts
- magistros*: A high-ranking dignity in the middle Byzantine period. The *magistroi* lost some of their prestige in the eleventh century when the title was awarded to middle-rank courtiers and officials
- mystographos*: Palatine official likely of the close imperial circle, often assigned judicial duties both in the themes and in the courts of the Hippodrome and the velum
- nobellimos*: Previously exclusive to the imperial family this title was also awarded to supreme military commanders by the last third of the eleventh century. Alexios Komnenos held it before rising to the throne
- orphanotrophos*: Director of an orphanage. During the early Byzantine period this was a clerical position. In Constantinople, however, the *orphanotrophoi* eventually joined the secular hierarchy and often held other offices in the bureaucracy
- patrikios*: Evoking the republican patriciate this high-ranking dignity was awarded to the highest-ranking officials in the tenth century. In the course of the eleventh century it lost some of its lustre, though Attaleiates for one proudly held it
- praipositos*: In late antiquity the *praepositus sacri cubiculi* was the highest-ranking eunuch serving the emperor in the capacity of grand chamberlain. In the middle Byzantine period, the *praipositoi* were eunuchs involved in palace ceremonial. The position is no longer attested from the Komnenian period onwards
- protasekretis*: The head of the imperial chancery notably responsible for the drafting of *chrysoboulla*
- protospatharios*: Court dignity of some distinction which by the eleventh century had declined in significance and marked the entry of an individual to the senate
- sekreton*: A bureau of the imperial administration
- tagma* (pl. *tagmata*): A unit of professional soldiers under direct imperial command. The *tagmata* were created in the iconoclast era by Konstantinos V (718–775 CE) as a check on the power of the commanders (*strategoï*) of the armies of the *themata*. Later in the tenth century *tagmata* were quartered all over the empire. By Attaleiates'

time, the distinction between thematic and tagmatic units had faded and the term *tagma* now referred to any Roman army unit

thema (pl. *themata*): One of the provinces of the empire. This system of military organization was in decline in Attaleiates' time when the empire relied on full-time professional or mercenary soldiers and frontier-based army units

vestes: This title first appears in the tenth century when it was granted to prominent figures in Romanía's the military establishment. Title inflation had made it available to mid-level officials by the middle of the eleventh century

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS

CHAPTER I—INTRODUCTION

In the 1920s, Eileen Power's *Medieval People* pioneered historically sensitive reconstructions of life in the Middle Ages. Focused on six different individuals known to us through more or less complete written and material records, she evocatively reconstructed the realities of medieval life for both academic and lay audiences. More recently, Adrienne Mayor's *The Poison King: The Life and Legend of Mithridates, Rome's Deadliest Enemy* outlined an argument for historically bounded hypothesis as basis for methodologically correct storytelling (p. 5–6). John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* sets out the basic principles behind the use of counterfactual history (pp. 100–9), as does Niall Ferguson in *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*. When it comes to informed historical reconstruction, economic historians have long worked with models and highly speculative, if plausible data, to provide insights into important historical questions. A good example of such work would be Keith Hopkins' "Rome, Taxes, Rents, and Trade" (pp. 190–231). In transferring such approaches to Byzantine social history, I construct a plausible model courtier, whose experience affords the reader a look at a whole class of which he is a representative.

There are not many book-length focused studies on Byzantine officialdom. One somewhat dated exception is Gunter Weiss, *Ostromische*

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D. Krallis, *Serving Byzantium's Emperors*,
New Approaches to Byzantine History and Culture,
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04525-8>

Beamte im Spiegel der Schriften des Michael Psellos, who used the writings of Psellos to discuss the empire's bureaucracy. For Late Antiquity Christopher Kelly's *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* is essential. More recently, the labor of Jacov Ljubarskij (*Η Προσωπικότητα και το Έργο του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού*), Eva De Vries Van der Velden (see Bibliography), and Anthony Kaldellis (*The Argument of the Chronographia of Michael Psellos*) has put life into the monastic garb of the witty and political Michael Psellos, while a two decades or so back Margaret Mullet's *Theophylact of Ochrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* outlined circles of patronage in the empire at a time when Attaleiates was active. Still, with the possible exception of Kaldellis' translations of Psellos' letters on his family, where the protean courtier's mind speaks to us through the lucid English prose of the modern scholar, most of the work discussed here is difficult for the uninitiated reader. It is addressed to the specialist and would, perhaps, prove challenging even for professional historians of other ages and regions.

In the present book, Attaleiates becomes a lens through which to look at the polity of the medieval Romans in a given point in time. As a provincial, he helps link the capital in which he served with his place of origin and with the rural areas he visited during his service as a judge in the imperial army. Anthony Kaldellis' *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformation of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* has outlined a most compelling argument in support of a closer relationship between the capital and the provinces. I have followed his lead in "Popular Political Agency in Byzantium's Village and Towns." Similarly, James Howard-Johnston, "The Peira and Legal Practices in Eleventh-Century Byzantium" (p. 74), sees Byzantium as an "intensively governed" polity. For a different take on this matter Leonora Neville's *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950–1100*, where she argues for a Byzantine state rather indifferent to the fate of the provinces. This very argument she pursues from a different angle in "Organic Local Government and Village Authority." Paul Magdalino's "Byzantine Snobbery" discusses Constantinopolitan responses to people from the provinces. Finally, claims in this book about Attaleiates' life as a historian are substantiated by research presented in my book *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*. Here we will rather be focusing on his life and career as a judge and a member of Romanía's officialdom.

CHAPTER 2

Michael Psellos' *Chronographia* is the text on which much modern analysis on the eleventh century relies. Following Psellos, Karayannopoulos describes eleventh-century emperors as incompetent in the second volume of his *Ιστορία του Βυζαντινού Κράτους* (p. 482). George Ostrogorsky in his *History of the Byzantine State* sees the same emperors as weak. A factual modern account of the era that shies away from Psellos' rhetorical excess can be found in "Erratic Government: 1025–1081," the eighteenth chapter of Warren Treadgold's *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. Similarly, open to a more intricate reading of the eleventh century is Michael Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025–1204: A Political History*. A survey of the cultural developments that marked the eleventh century can be found in the fourth chapter of Anthony Kaldellis' *Hellenism in Byzantium*. Chapter 4 (pp. 191–224) deals with Psellos and his impact on future generations of Byzantine thinkers. Stavroula Chondridou also focuses on cultural developments in her *Ο Κωνσταντίνος Θ' Μονομάχος και η Εποχή του Ενδέκατος Αιώνας* [Constantine IX Monomachos and the Eleventh-Century Era]. More recently, in *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood: The Rise and Fall of Byzantium, 955 A.D. to the First Crusade*, Anthony Kaldellis took a stab at the question of the eleventh-century crisis. Eshewing discussions of systemic failure, he looked at the empire's troubles as the result of an unfortunate confluence of events. In his work, expansive fiscal policy, increasing political instability, and deteriorating international environment come together to nearly crush the Byzantine polity.

The association of the Soviet Union to Byzantium was an almost inevitable outcrop of the cold war and is evident in Romilly Jenkins' chatty *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries, AD 610–1071* (pp. 3–4). Silvia Ronchey notes in the introduction to her translation of Alexander Kazhdan's magisterial *L'aristocrazia bizantina: dal principio dell'XI al fine dell'XII secolo* (p. 22) that he associated Byzantine bureaucratism with soviet *nomenklatura* and believed that this Byzantine trait impeded the development of the feudal aristocracy, a fundamental step—in his mind—toward Western-style social evolution. A volume edited by Vassiliki Vlyssidou deals with a number of important questions regarding the eleventh century: *The Empire in Crisis (?): Byzantium in the Eleventh Century (1025–1081)*.

The so-called civilian/military divide marks the study of the eleventh century. This concept was authoritatively expressed by George

Ostrogorsky in *History of the Byzantine State* (pp. 320–50, esp. 341–44) and was reaffirmed by Speros Vryonis Jr in “Byzantine Imperial Authority: Theory and Practice in the Eleventh Century” (p. 143). The seminal work on the aristocracy and its bid for power in the eleventh century is Jean-Claude Cheynet’s *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)*. His is a systematic and broadly convincing critique of the civilian/military divide. A thorough summation of this scholarly controversy appears in Walter Kaegi’s “The Controversy about the Bureaucratic and Military Factions” (pp. 25–33). For a return to historical readings focused on the civilian/military divide, consider Alexander Kazhdan and Silvia Ronchey, *L’aristocrazia bizantina: del principio dell’ XI alla fine del XII secolo*, p. 57, addressing Kaegi.

If a reading of the eleventh century focused on the clash between bureaucrats and the army marked modern readings of the time, a deeper scholarly prejudice has hindered analysis of an interesting phenomenon. The eleventh century is a time when Byzantine authors engage with Roman republican history. Such engagement, much as any other form of Byzantine exploration of the Greco-Roman past, has for years been treated as shallow and rhetorically inflected, a form of regurgitation of the past for the purposes of effect. For this line of argument, see Cyril Mango, “Discontinuity with the Classical Past in Byzantium.” The same argument is forcefully if indirectly made in Mango’s “Byzantine Literature as a Distorting Mirror.”

The reader will note that I use the terms medieval Roman polity almost interchangeably with Byzantium or Byzantine Empire. Polity mirrors here the Greek term *politeia*, a stand-in for the Latin *res publica*. The seeds for the discussion of Byzantium as a Roman Monarchical republic are to be found in Hans-Georg Beck’s Chapter 5 (Die Kaiserwahl) from *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*. Here Beck cut through the smokescreen of religious imagery associated with the representation of the emperor to consider republican Roman elements in the election process. Only recently, however, did Anthony Kaldellis outline the decisive argument for a “republican” Byzantium in *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*. My own earlier “‘Democratic’ Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium: Michael Attaleiates’ ‘Republicanism’ in Context” offered readings that treat Byzantine republicanism as more than affectation without going as far as Kaldellis. This book sheds my earlier shyness and follows Beck and Kaldellis in order to set its story in a polity that is rather different from the quasi-absolutist monarchy of older Byzantine scholarship.

The military crisis that the empire faced in the eleventh century has given rise to conflicting interpretations as seen in the vigorous dialogue between John Haldon's *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World 565–1204* and Warren Treadgold's *Byzantium and Its Army, 284–1081*. While, however, the period before the Crusade is mostly read as a time of crisis, the Byzantine economy was booming throughout the era. This process has been studied by Alan Harvey in *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire: 900–1200* and by Angeliki Laiou and Cécile Morrisson in *The Byzantine Economy* (pp. 90–165). Case studies for urban development in different cities of the empire at the time can be found in the three-volume *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh to the Fifteenth Century* edited by Angeliki Laiou. Cécile Morrisson's "La Dévaluation de la Monnaie Byzantine" is essential for a discussion of the monetary and fiscal crises that marked the late eleventh century.

A few other themes emerge in this chapter. For an introduction to the issue of language in Byzantium, see Geoffrey Horrocks' chapter on Language in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (pp. 777–84). Gilbert Dagron, "Formes et fonctions du pluralisme linguistique à Byzance (IXe–XIIe siècles)" is also important. On the rise of Greek as an official language of the empire, see Nikolas Oikonomides, «L'«unilinguisme» officiel de Constantinople byzantine (VIIe–XIIe s.)». On the location of the Court of the Hippodrome, see Andreas Goutzioukostas' *Administration of Justice in Byzantium (9th–12th Centuries): Judicial Officers and Secular Tribunals of Constantinople* (pp. 121–30) for the "covered hippodrome." The political significance of Chariot racing is highlighted in Chapter 6 (Shows and Factions) of John Liebeschuetz's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*. The classic study on the circus factions is Alan Cameron's *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*. The conclusions of this work should however be revisited in view of Anthony Kaldellis' arguments about the political role of the people in *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in Byzantium*. On the Emperor Basileios II and his *nachleben*, see Paul Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer*.

In the context of rapidly changing frontiers and notable population movements, ethnic identity becomes an important question. Here one should start with Anthony Kaldellis' provocative reconceptualization of Byzantine ethnic identity in "From Rome to New Rome, From Empire to Nation State: Reopening the Question of Byzantium's Roman Identity." On the challenges created by the ethno-religious reality faced by the

empire in the eleventh century, see Mark Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600–1025*. For Constantinople’s mosques, see Claire D. Anderson’s “Islamic Spaces and Diplomacy in Constantinople (Tenth to thirteenth Centuries C.E.)” and Stephen W. Reinert’s “The Muslim Presence in Constantinople, 9th–15th Centuries: Some Preliminary Observations.”

For the presence of westerners in the empire, see Alexander P. Kazhdan’s “Latins and Franks in Byzantium.” Also consider the careful analysis of Paul Magdalino in *The Byzantine Background to the First Crusade* for the place of Western warriors in Byzantium. Paul Magdalino looks at the ways in which Constantinopolitans reacted to provincials in “Byzantine Snobbery.” The classic case of the internal outsider in Byzantium is the Paphlagonian. For that, see Magdalino’s “Paphlagonians in Byzantine High-Society.”

On the Normans, see Graham Alexander Loud, “How ‘Norman’ was the Norman Conquest of Southern Italy?” “Continuity and change in Norman Italy: the Campania during the eleventh and twelfth centuries” and John France’s “The Occasion of the Coming of the Normans to Italy.” Also see Ann Wharton Epstein’s “The Date and Significance of the Cathedral of Canosa in Apulia, South Italy” for Byzantino-Norman syncretism. “Working with Roman history: Attaleiates’ portrayal of the Normans” by Alexander Olson examines Byzantine attitudes toward the Normans, while Jonathan Shepard’s “When Greek Meets Greek: Alexius Comnenus and Bohemond in 1097–8” highlights Robert Guiscard’s adaptability and adoption of Byzantine habits and language. On the South Italian context of these interactions, see Ghislaine Noyé’s “La Calabre entre Byzantins, Sarrasins et Normands.”

For the peculiar case of the marital agreement between Michael VII and Robert Guiscard, see Helen Bibicou’s “Une page d’histoire diplomatique de Byzance au XIe siècle: Michel VII Doukas, Robert Guiscard et la pension des dignitaires.” Paul Stephenson’s *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204* deals with the empire’s Northern frontier. Chapter 3 in particular (pp. 80–116) examines the arrival of the Patzinakoi in the Balkans.

CHAPTER 3

For books and Byzantine book culture, one may start with the account of “Byzantine Book Production” by John Lowden in the *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*. The author provides here a useful bibliography.

In German and in Greek translation, one may consult Herbert Hunger's *Schreiben und Lesen in Byzanz. Die byzantinische Buchkultur*. Nigel Wilson's *Scholars of Byzantium* offers useful information on the cost of book procurement and production (pp. 120–25). On books and reading see Teresa Shawcross' "Byzantium a Bookish World" in the volume edited with Ida Toth titled *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*. For the *Diataxis*, a crucial source on Attaleiates, one must look to Paul Gautier "La *Diataxis* de Michel Attaliatē." For a translation of the *Diataxis* in English and for all translated passages from this text featured in this book, see Alice-Mary Talbot's translation and commentary of Attaleiates' text in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents* (vol. 1, pp. 326–36) a collection edited by John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero. The *Diataxis* is heavily used in Attaleiates' biography that features in Chapter 1 of *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline in Eleventh-century Byzantium*. Inmaculada Pérez Martín's analysis of the *History's* manuscript tradition and of Attaleiates' textual debts to ancient and medieval authors in her published translation and commentary of this text is invaluable: *Miguel Ataliates: Historia*.

An issue emerging in this chapter relates to Byzantine uses of the past and of ancient literature in general. Anthony Kaldellis' "The Byzantine Role in the Making of the Corpus of Classical Greek Historiography: A Preliminary Investigation" offers a framework for understanding Byzantine engagement with ancient literary works. His analysis puts the work on the classics by Byzantine scholars at the very center of broader European processes of engagement with the past. One idea that medieval Roman scholars lifted from the world of their ancient Greek antecedents is that of the historian's duty to educate future generations of citizens. Here Attaleiates followed in the steps of Leon Diakonos, who wrote in the late tenth century, but also had classical models, which to follow in Thucydides, Polybios, and Diodoros of Sicily. Among the texts owned by the monastic library of Attaleiates' monastery, one finds a copy of Achilles Tatios' *Leukippe and Kleitophon*. The presence of this Roman era Romantic novel in a monastic library raises interesting questions about the boundaries between secular and sacred cultures. These are also discussed in Chapter 11, dedicated to Attaleiates' pious foundation, and Chapter 12, which focuses on faith.

For the Byzantine engagement with the ancient novel, one should study the fifth chapter (pp. 256–69) of Anthony Kaldellis' *Hellenism in Byzantium*. The same author offers fascinating thoughts about the

Byzantine ability to accurately reconstruct and imagine alien worlds in “Historicism in Byzantine Thought and Literature.” For Michael Psellos’ responses to the ancient novel, one should consult Andrew Dyck’s *Michael Psellus: The Essays on Euripides and George of Pisidia and on Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius*. One may access some of these Byzantine Novels through Elizabeth Jeffreys’ elegant translations in *Four Byzantine Novels*.

For Attaleiates’ legal synopsis, the *Ponema Nomikon*, see Alexander Kazhdan’s entry in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (vol. 1, p. 229). In Greek, Spyridon Troianos’ *Οι Πηγές του Βυζαντινού Δικαίου* discusses Attaleiates’ legal work as well as his influence on Armenopoulos. Zachary Ray Chitwood’s *Byzantine Legal Culture and the Roman Legal Tradition, 867–1056* (pp. 181–82) also touches upon the *Ponema Nomikon*. My own *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline* (pp. xxii–xxiii) offers some thoughts on that matter too. As noted in this chapter, Attaleiates’ work was copied early on by the Continuator of Skylitzes. On Skylitzes and his work, one must consult Catherine Holmes’ *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)* and Sophia Eirini Kipidou’s Greek monograph: *Η σύννομη ιστοριών του Ιωάννη Σκυλίτζη και οι πηγές της (811–1057)*. For an introduction to the study of Byzantine officials’ lead seals, one should look no further than the Web site of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

CHAPTER 4

On Byzantine children and childhood, see Alice-Mary Talbot and Arietta Papaconstantinou, *Becoming Byzantine: Children and Childhood in Byzantium*. Among Byzantine primary sources, Michael Psellos’ *Encomium to His Mother*, the *Funeral Oration for the Death of His Daughter*, and a number of his letters to friends translated by Anthony Kaldellis in *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos* offer sensitive insights into domestic life and the relationship between parents and children. On Byzantine children, see Cecily Hennessy, “The Byzantine Child: Picturing Complex Family Dynamics” with relevant bibliography. The reader should find more on the Byzantine family and household in the bibliographical essay for Chapter 6.

For the travels of Sir John Mandeville and the curse of Satalia, one may use the excellent resources put together online at the University of Rochester by Tamarah Kohanski and David C. Benson:

<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/kohanski-and-benson-the-book-of-john-mandeville> for the text. There is no foundational English language study of the city of Attaleia. The entry on the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (vol. 1, pp. 228–29) provides but cursory information. Epigraphic, archeological, historical, and hagiographic sources inform any reconstitution of life in Attaleia. We find much of this material concentrated in the essential 8th volume of the *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, published by the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Hansgerd Hellenkemper and Friedrich Hild, *TIB 8: Lykien und Pamphylien I*).

Other sources for the study of the city are mostly indirect. The presence of the Byzantine navy in Attaleia allows one to reconstruct the social life of the city. For the military, social, and broadly logistical realities associated with the Byzantine navy Helene Ahrweiler's *Byzance et la mer* is still important. On the natural resources and industries associated with the navy, see Russell Meiggs' *Trees and Timber in the Mediterranean World*. Byzantine tactical manuals based on ancient works about the organization and fighting of wars can, if critically read, help us better understand the operation of Romania's navy. For such a text, see George Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI*. For a point-by-point analysis of this document, see John Haldon' *A Critical Commentary on The Taktika of Leo VI* (pp. 389–417) for a discussion of Leon's Constitution 19 on naval affairs. John Pryor' "Shipping and seafaring" offers extensive bibliography on naval affairs. Some parts of Leon's *Taktika* provide information about naval warfare in this chapter. The Mardaites remain mysterious to scholars. The *Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire (c. 500–1492)* (p. 382) discusses them as Armenian in origin. Before settling in Attaleia and joining the empire's naval forces, they acted as guerillas fighting for the empire in Syria, which had recently been conquered by the Caliphate. Here they served Byzantine interests by raising all manner of mayhem in Muslim lands.

Readers interested in Byzantine dress and the appearance of officials should consult Maria Parani's invaluable *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th–15th Centuries)* and Jennifer Ball's *Byzantine Dress: Representations of Secular Dress in Eighth- to Twelfth-Century Painting*. On *diglossia*, see C. A. Ferguson's "Diglossy." Stephanos Efthymiadis' "Audience, Language and Patronage in Byzantine Hagiography" (p. 252) explains that the *koine* of hagiographical writing offered "precious insights into the spoken Greek of the Byzantine era." Also see Notis Toufexis,

“Diglossia and Register Variation in Medieval Greek” and Milovanovic-Bahram’s “Three levels of Style in Gregory of Nazianzus: The Case of *Oration 43*” as well as Ihor Ševčenko’s “Levels of style in Byzantine prose” (pp. 292–94) on individual authors who used multiple registers of Greek in their works depending of the targeted audience.

CHAPTER 5

For a comprehensive discussion of travel by land and sea in the Byzantine world, see Anna Avramea, “Land and Sea Communications, Fourth–Fifteenth Centuries” in the *Economic History of Byzantium*. Avramea provides extensive bibliography on the subject. For the traveler’s experience in Greek, see Apostolos Karpozilos’ “Ταξιδιώτικες περιγραφές και εντυπώσεις σε επιστολογραφικά κείμενα.” An important book on communications and travel in the Middle Ages, with extensive references to Byzantium, is Michael McCormick’s *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300–900*.

On shipwrecks, which provide essential information about merchant vessels, see A. J. Parker’s *Ancient Shipwrecks of the Mediterranean and the Roman Provinces*. On the archeology of Byzantine ships in particular, see Frederick van Doorninck, “Byzantine Shipwrecks,” in *The Economic History of Byzantium* (pp. 899–905) with extensive bibliography. Also see George F. Bass and Frederick H. van Doorninck, Jr., *Yassi Ada. Vol. I: A Seventh-Century Byzantine Shipwreck* and George F. Bass, Sheila D. Matthews, J. Richard Steffy, and Frederick H. van Doorninck, Jr., *Serçe Limanı. An Eleventh-Century Shipwreck. Vol. I, The Ship and Its Anchorage, Crew, and Passengers* for the Yasi Ada and Serçe Limanı wrecks. More recently, the stunning finds in the Yenikapı excavations in Istanbul have started enriching our views of both shipping and the city itself. For a useful survey with compelling visuals, see Mark Rose and Şengül Aydingün, “Under Istanbul” as well as Rebecca Ingram and Michael Jones, “Yenikapı: Documenting Two Byzantine Merchant Ships from the Yenikapı Excavations in Istanbul, Turkey.”

For travel supplies and logistics, see John Matthews’ accessible and elegantly written *The Journey of Theophanes: Travel, Business, and Daily Life in the Roman East*. Matthews deals with an earlier period in history, but his book nevertheless offers the reader a sense of what was involved in long-distance travel. The discussion of the city of Abydos in this chapter is cursory but intended to highlight the survival of ancient patterns of

urban organization in the Middle Ages. While Abydos' grid plan was an exception by medieval standards, it is important to consider the impact of antique forms of urban economic, social, and spatial arrangement on medieval Romans. Specifically then on the grid pattern at the customs port town of Abydos, see Michael Angold's "The Shaping of the Medieval Byzantine 'City'" and Bryan Ward-Perkins' "Can the Survival of an Ancient Town-Plan be Used as Evidence of Dark-Age Urban Life?" On Abydos as a tax payment area, see Angeliki Laiou and Cecile Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (p. 52).

Like Abydos, Constantinople was one place where antique urban planning and monumentality remained relatively unaffected by the advent of the Middle Ages. The rough outlines of late antiquity's urban planning survived the population collapse and the new impoverished status of the Dark Age Roman polity. For the built environment and landscapes of Romanía from the end of Antiquity to Attaleiates' century, see the volume edited by Philipp Niewohner, *The Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia: From the End of Late Antiquity Until the Coming of the Turks*. Back in the capital, Attaleiates would have walked in streets marked by the imprint of antiquity and inflected by accretions of time. On the Constantinople's urban development and neighborhoods, see Paul Magdalino, "The Maritime Neighbourhoods of Constantinople: Commercial and Residential Functions, Sixth to Twelfth Centuries." Also by Magdalino, "Medieval Constantinople" in *Studies on the History and Topography of Constantinople* is useful as is Cyril Mango's "The Development of Constantinople as an Urban Centre." On the city's commercial geography, see Marlia M. Mango "The Commercial Map of Constantinople." A walk through the capital, with much information useful to the traveler seeking a sense of the locals' understanding of their own city can be found in the *Patria* of Constantinople recently edited and translated by Albrecht Berger in *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople: The Patria*.

On gossip in the capital and on popular opinion, see Chapter 5 in Anthony Kaldellis' *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* (pp. 197–98). On gossip relating to Michael IV, Psellos' *Chronographia* (Book 3.18–21) is our best source. On the empress Zoe see Barbara Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium 1025–1204* (pp. 42–55) and "Imperial Women and the Ideology of Womanhood in the eleventh and twelfth centuries" (pp. 79–82). The special position of the empress in the Byzantine political scene is the focus of Judith Herrin's "The

Many Empresses of the Byzantine Court (And their Many Attendants).” For an overview of Byzantine attitudes toward elite women, see Kathryn Ringrose, “The Byzantine Body” in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*. Neil Bronwen and Lynda Garland address *Questions of Gender in Byzantine Society*.

On love, *eros*, and the senses, subjects little touched by a field of studies that is sometimes all too focused on asceticism, see Hans G. Beck’s essential *Byzantinisches Erotikon*. Stratis Papaioannou, “Michael Psellos on friendship and love: erotic discourse in eleventh-century Constantinople” takes us to Attaleiates and Psellos’ world of eleventh-century sensibilities. Paolo Odorico explores the rhetorical dimensions of discourses on love in “L’amour à Byzance: Un sujet de rhétorique?” while the edited volume by Ingela Nilsson considers *Plotting with Eros: Essays on the Poetics of Love and the Erotics of Reading*. On Byzantine erotic visual imagery, see Eunice Dauterman Maguire and Henry Maguire, *Other Icons: Art and Power in Byzantine Secular Culture*.

On Byzantine education, Athanasios Markopoulos offers a useful survey in “Teachers and Textbooks in Byzantium: Ninth to Eleventh Centuries.” As ever, Markopoulos provides extensive bibliography. A classic work on Byzantine letters is Paul Lemerle’s *Byzantine Humanism, the First Phase: Notes and Remarks on Education and Culture in Byzantium from Its Origins to the 10th Century*. Section 17 on “Language, Education, and Literacy” in the *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (pp. 777–826) is an useful introduction to the fields of Language, Education, Literacy, Numeracy, and Science and the study of Byzantine Libraries. The reader will find here short chapters on each subject and the basic bibliography necessary for navigating the field. Specifically for Psellos’ influence on future generations of historians, see Anthony Kaldellis’ *Hellenism in Byzantium* (Chapter 4, pp. 191–224).

Section 14 of *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (pp. 691–98) by Bernard Stolte is an introduction to Byzantine Legal literature. On law and legal education in Byzantium little in English had been produced until recently (for that see bibliographical essay for Chapter 7). Two seminal pieces appeared in the 1970s in *Travaux et Mémoires* by Wanda Wolska-Conus: “L’école de droit et l’enseignement du droit à Byzance au XIe siècle: Xiphilin et Psellos” and “Les écoles de Psellos et de Xiphilin sous Constantine IX Monomaque.” In German, one may read Marie Theres Fögen, “Modell und Mythos. Die Rechtsfakultäten von Konstantinopel, Neapel und Bologna im Mittelalter” for a focus on

the eleventh century and in Italian Fausto Gorla's "Il giurista nell'impero romano d'Orient (da Giustiniano agli inizi del secolo XI)." On the *Peira* consult Nicolas Oikonomides' "The 'Peira' of Eustathios Rhomaios: An Abortive Attempt to Innovate in Byzantine Law." More recently, Zachary Ray Chitwood's *Byzantine Legal Culture* (p. 150–83) outlines the operation of Byzantine legal education. His analysis contests some of the arguments developed in the two pieces by Wanda Wolska-Conus cited above.

CHAPTER 6

The chapter by Cécile Morrisson and Jean-Claude Cheynet on "Prices and Wages in the Byzantine World" in the *Economic History of Byzantium* (pp. 815–78) is a useful source for all manner of price that one may wish to consult while reconstructing daily life in Constantinople. In it, the reader will find references to primary sources, which are otherwise too diffuse and numerous to cite separately. Paul Lemerle wrote in the 1970s the foundational work on Attaleiates' property, fortune, and investments. A chapter of his *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin* was dedicated to Attaleiates and his pious foundation, working out aspects of the economic strategies expressed within the *Diataxis*. After him, Paul Gautier provided essential biographical background for Attaleiates, clarifying aspects of his career in his introduction to the 1979 edition of the *Diataxis* in *Revue des Études Byzantines*. My own *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline* dedicated a chapter to the judge's biography (Chapter 1), with focused attention on his economic strategies as those can be traced in the *Diataxis*. The present chapter returns to this material and builds on it in order to bring Attaleiates' household to life. The reader could refer to this other work for detailed bibliographical reference on issues addressed here that range from *Charistike* grants and court titulature to the specific location of churches and monasteries patroned by Attaleiates.

The stipulations of the *Diataxis* raise important questions regarding elite privilege, imperial grants, and tax exemptions in Byzantium. Nicolas Oikonomides' *Fiscalité et exemption fiscale à Byzance (IXe–XIIe s.)* is essential reading on this very issue. For a more recent discussion in English of many central questions regarding this issue, one should consult Mark Bartusis' lucid analysis in *Land and Privilege in Byzantium: The Institution of Pronoia*, especially Chapters 3 and 4.

Any discussion on the Byzantine household must take place in the context of broader conversations about Byzantine family life. In our field, the work of Alexander Kazhdan and specifically *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* have for years set the tone, by presenting the Byzantines as selfish political agents with no degree of loyalty toward one another beyond family links. Kazhdan defined the Byzantine family as a tight, roughly four-person unit, basically a nuclear household. This view has come under scrutiny in the past few years. My own *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline* views Attaleiates as a social agent with family interests but also much wider social, cultural, and political horizons than those set by Kazhdan. While one may with reason scrutinize Kazhdan's take on the Byzantine family, his work with Silvia Ronchey on the nature of the Byzantine aristocracy and, by extension, Byzantine aristocratic families is essential reading: *L'aristocrazia bizantina: dal principio dell'XI al fine dell'XII secolo*.

For recent scholarship on the Byzantine family, one may consult the volume edited by Leslie Brubaker and Shaun Tougher, *Approaches to the Byzantine Family* with interesting articles on "Social Mobility" (Claudia Ludwig, pp. 233–46), the "Greek and Roman origins of Byzantine family structures" (Mary Harlow and Tim Parkin, pp. 1–20), and "The Middle Byzantine house and family" (Simon Ellis, pp. 247–72).

CHAPTER 7

Zachary Ray Chitwood's *Byzantine Legal Culture and the Roman Legal Tradition, 867–1056* offers an essential guide into the legal establishment of the tenth and eleventh centuries, with elegant chapters on Eustathios Romaios and essential correctives on older work about the nature of legal debates in the eleventh century. For the legal process and the courts in Constantinople a work in Greek by Andreas Goutzioukostas, *Administration of Justice in Byzantium (9th–12th Centuries): Judicial Officers and Secular Tribunals of Constantinople*. Both Chitwood and Goutzioukostas provide essential bibliographical signposting on the matter of Byzantine justice. On the practice of law in Byzantium in the period under study, see Dieter Simon and Angeliki E. Laiou, *Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth–Twelfth Centuries*. If one wishes to go deeper and think more about the practice of law Roos Meijering, "Ρωμαϊκὰ ἀγωγὰί. Two Byzantine Treatises on Legal Actions" is useful.

On the relationship between the palace and the city, see Judith Herrin, "Byzantium, the Palace and the City" in *Margins and Metropolis: Authority Across the Byzantine Empire*. For the social dimension of this relationship, see Paul Magdalino, "The People and the Palace." Michael Featherstone's "The everyday palace in the tenth century" offers essential signposting for understanding the physical reality of the Byzantine court. For the Byzantine court as a society separate from even if embedded in Constantinople, the volume edited by Henry Maguire titled *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* is an accessible survey. In it, Alexander Kazhdan and Michael McCormick suggest in "The Social World of the Byzantine Court," (p. 174) that the senate in the days of Attaleiates had a membership of about 2000 men. The chapters by Jeffrey Featherstone and Jean-Claude Cheynet on "Emperor and Court" (pp. 505–17) and "Bureaucracy and Aristocracies" (pp. 518–26) in the *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* offer useful introductions to Byzantine court society, the bureaucracy and the interaction among court, officialdom, and the Byzantine aristocracy.

On the Astrolabe of Brescia, see O. M. Dalton, *The Byzantine Astrolabe at Brescia*. More on Byzantine astronomical instruments can be found in Judith V. Field and Michael T. Wright's "Gears from the Byzantines: A Portable Sundial with Calendrical Gearing." Much of what we know of Byzantine court rhythms comes from a peculiar tenth-century document on ceremonial, known by its Latin title as the *De Cerimoniis Aulae Byzantini*. This text was produced at the order of Emperor Konstantinos VII in the middle of the century and collects information about a series of ceremonial occasions unfolding in both the palace grounds and the city as a whole. More can be gleaned about court ceremonial from the so-called treatises of precedence (ex. *The Kleterologion of Theophilos*), documents dated to different times in the history of the empire that list ranks of officials as they would appear before the emperor in formal occasions. The reader of this material needs to remain ever vigilant. Some of the material in Konstantinos VII's compendium is clearly of no more than antiquarian value, while the treaties of precedence may represent moments in time in what was likely a rather more fluid system of ranks. That said, such material is essential in our effort to reconstruct Romanía's court life and is therefore used here with plausibility rather than confirmable accuracy in mind.

On Maleses' life and career, see *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline* (pp. 237–43) with a discussion of the relevant scholarship.

On his position as *Logothetes of the Waters*, see Jim Crow, “Ruling the Waters: Managing the Water Supply of Constantinople, AD 330–1204.” Eva De Vries—Van der Velden presented Psellos’ relationship with the circles of Romanos in “Psellos, Romain Diogénès et Mantzikert.”

CHAPTER 8

On the position of army judge held by Attaleiates, the reader should consult John Haldon, “The *krites tou stratopedou*: a new office for a new situation?” On the same matter, see Andreas Gkoutzioukostas, “Ο κριτής του στρατοπέδου και ο κριτής του φοσσάτου.” For military justice, one may also look at an article in Greek by Taxiarchis Koliás, titled: “Τα στρατιωτικά εγκλήματα κατά τους βυζαντινούς χρόνους.”

Chapter 8 charts the multiple links that existed between the imperial camp and the people traveling with the emperor around the empire and the population of the polity at large. To achieve this goal, one relies on hundreds of letters between people of Attaleiates’ social and professional circle and their contacts around the empire. Navigating this material is by no means straightforward. One resource available to everyone is the *Prosopography of the Byzantine World* maintained by Kings’ College in London and available online: <http://blog.pbw.cch.kcl.ac.uk> under the supervision of a team headed by Michael Jeffreys. For those seeking information on Psellos’ letter collection, see Eustratios Papaioannou and his “Das Briefcorpus des Michael Psellos: Vorarbeiten zu einer kritischer Edition; mit einem Anhang: Edition eines unbekanntes Briefes.”

There is extensive scholarship on the Byzantine army, its organization, and performance. John Haldon’s many articles and books touch upon the subject. *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World 565–1204* offers a general comprehensive synopsis. Specifically on the army in the eleventh century, Haldon’s recent “L’armée au XIe siècle, quelques questions” is a succinct summation of the latest scholarly debates. On the links between army units and local people, Walter Kaegi’s “Regionalism in the Balkan Armies of the Byzantine Empire” is still current.

The study of the Byzantine army does raise the question of the place of foreign mercenaries in both army and society. Who is Roman and who not? This question has been repeatedly addressed in Jonathan

Shepard's work: "Aspects of Byzantine Attitudes and Policy towards the West in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," "When Greek Meets Greek: Alexius Comnenus and Bohemond in 1097–8," and "The Uses of the Frank in Eleventh-Century Byzantium." On Byzantine outsiders also, see Dion C. Smythe's edited volume: *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider: Papers from the Thirty-Second Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, March 1998*. Outside the narrow space of the army, the question of *Romanitas* has been recast recently by Anthony Kaldellis in *Hellenism in Byzantium* and *The Byzantine Republic* (see bibliographical essays for the Introduction and Chapter 10). For the negotiations with Guiscard, see Helen Bibicou's "Une page d'histoire diplomatique de Byzance au XI siècle: Robert Guiscard et la pension des dignitaires." Olympias—Helena, Bohemond's sister had been brought up at the Byzantine court.

Regarding the career of Rouselios, George Lebeniotes' *Το στασιαστικό κίνημα του Νορμανδού Ουρσελίου στην Μικρά Ασία (1073–1076)* (p. 46) considers the possibility that Attaleiates knew him personally. I am convinced that court and campaign life made such a relationship inevitable and that Attaleiates' fascination with the foreign warriors was certainly based on such an acquaintance. Lebeniotes also discusses (pp. 74–84) Rouselios' career before the rebellion. This opens in Sicily when, already in 1063, Rouselios was among the Normans who defeated the Muslim forces facing them at the battle of Cerami. He had fought next to Robert Guiscard. Lebeniotes discusses (pp. 64–66 and pp. 70–74) the Norman presence in the Armeniakon province and (p. 156 and pp. 164–67) the various fortresses controlled by Rouselios. Eleonora Kountoura-Galake, «Θέμα Αρμενιακόν» in *Η Μικρά Ασία των Θεμάτων: Έρευνες πάνω στην Γεωγραφική φυσιογνωμία και προσωπογραφία των Βυζαντινών Θεμάτων της Μικράς Ασίας, 7ος–11ος αι.* edited by Vasiliki Vlysidou considers the case of Hervè Frangopoulos (p. 129) and Crispin (p. 165). Mark Whittow, "Rural Fortification in Western Europe and Byzantium, Tenth to Twelfth Century" (pp. 64–67) on the non-martial nature of the Byzantine aristocratic *oikos*. On Byzantine aristocratic *oikoi* as luxurious villas to be juxtaposed to the forts used by the Normans, see *Βυζαντινά Έγγραφα Μονής Πάτμου II* edited by Maria Nystazopoulou Pelekidou. Specifically pp. 7–9 on the *oikos* of Andronikos Doukas in the area of Miletos.

CHAPTER 9

Romanos' campaigning in Anatolia has long attracted the attention of scholars. Using Attaleiates' detailed analysis of Romanos' campaigns, John G. C. Anderson reconstructed the Byzantine army's trajectories in the years from 1068 to 1071 for his article "The road system of Asia Minor." Anderson's map needs to be treated carefully as it does not properly plot roads on relief. It does, however, offer a general template. When it comes to mapping Asia Minor, useful resources may be found in the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* edited by Richard Talbert and Thomas A. Sinclair's *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey*. This book's map of Romania's eastern frontier, as it extended from Syria to Mesopotamia all the way to Armenia, situates placenames, as they appear in Attaleiates' *History*, and guides the reader through plausible trajectories, accounting for relief, without actually marking military roads and mule tracks that may or may not have been active in the eleventh century. For the logistics and details of the Mantzikert campaign, see John Haldon's essential "Marching across Anatolia: Medieval Logistics and Modeling the Mantzikert Campaign."

CHAPTER 10

The discussion in this chapter stems from debates both old and new. Already from the early days of British Byzantine studies, John Bagnell Bury noted in his "The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire" the presence of a legal framework defining the functioning of the political system and setting the parameters for the operation of the imperial office in the context of the Roman *res publica*. Hans-Georg Beck further developed this idea in a non-systematic manner in the 70s. Despite these important insights, the general consensus in the field of Byzantine studies has veered in a different direction. Alexander Kazhdan notes in "The Emperor's New Clothes" (p. 31) that "Byzantium was autocratic, antiquity republican." Thus in less than a line on one single page the breach between antiquity and the Middle Ages was given a political dimension. In *Byzantium, the Empire of New Rome* by Cyril Mango (p. 219) we read: "not only did God ordain the existence of the empire, He also chose each individual emperor, which was why no human rules were formulated for his appointment." His colleague at Oxford, Dame Averil Cameron notes in her recent survey *The Byzantines* (pp. 12–14) that the essence of Byzantine ideology was Christian, blended

perhaps with Hellenic elements from the empire's eastern Greek heritage. To quote from the title of an influential article by Cyril Mango, Romania's Roman past and its long traditions of governance with all their ideological underpinnings are to be treated as a "Distorting Mirror." Even George Ostrogorsky's magisterial, *History of the Byzantine State*, sets the stage for the sidelining of society by focusing on the impersonal state and its relationship with atomized peasants, rather than conceiving society as a collective of political wills. For too long then, scholarship, for all its subtlety and significant contribution to our understanding of Byzantium, did not veer too far from Uspenskij and Vasil'evskij's nineteenth-century view of the empire as an orthodox union of villages under an absolute monarch.

And yet there is much more to Byzantium's Roman identity. In *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World* edited by Michael Peachin, Clifford Ando's "Chapter 2: From Republic to Empire" described the Roman people (his argument could be extended to their Byzantine heirs and successors) as "shareholders in the *res publica* and in their corporate capacity still sovereign in the state" (pp. 61). Anthony Kaldellis followed Ando's lead and recently offered a redefinition of the nature of the Byzantine political community. First came his claim in *Hellenism in Byzantium* that the middle Byzantine political community was in fact a community of national Romans, a position elaborated and refined in an article: "From Rome to New Rome, from Empire to Nation State: Reopening the Question of Byzantium's Roman Identity." What followed was a radical re-reading of Byzantine history along republican lines presented in *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*. The political community that was Byzantium as presented in the book in your hands owes much to these more recent readings.

In parallel with Kaldellis' work, though more timid in my conclusions, I have in years past charted Attaleiates' political opinions, suggesting that we may find in the judge's legal and historical writings elements of conscious and methodical valorization of republican thinking and popular activity: "'Democratic' Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium: Michael Attaleiates' 'Republicanism' in Context" and *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline*. Not fully aware at that time of the full scope of Kaldellis' revisionism, I read Byzantine republicanism as an outcrop of eleventh-century social and economic developments. In this book, I find myself transitioning from my more cautious early conclusions to the radical but rather more convincing reassessment offered by Kaldellis.

This transition has been made easier by new work on Byzantium. Leonora Neville's excellent *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: The Material for History of Nikephoros Bryennios* offers an eloquent reading of the Komnenian court through a Roman republican lens, while my former MA student at SFU, Chris Dickert, outlined in revealing fashion the significance of urban autonomy and concerted popular action in Byzantine Southern Italy in Attaleiates' lifetime, thus opening the door to further studies of urban autonomy and politics in Byzantium. As noted by Kaldellis in *The Byzantine Republic*, citing Theophilos, *Institouta* 1.2.6, in Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, vol. 3, 9, an Emperor is he who is granted the authority to rule by the people (βασιλεύς ἐστι ὁ τὸ κράτος τοῦ ἄρχειν παρὰ τοῦ δήμου λαβών). Much of what you read in this chapter is an attempt to consider the implications of this statement for political thought in the eleventh century.

CHAPTER 11

There is a large and rich literature on Byzantine monasteries as places of spiritual contemplation. Similarly, from the direction of economic history, work has been done on monastic institutions and pious houses as economic agents and players in the market economy. In this chapter, I return to the *Diataxis*, which furnishes upon closer inspection all manner of information on the social, material, and more strictly economic life of Attaleiates' monastery. John McGuckin's "Monasticism and Monasteries" (pp. 611–29) in the *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* offers an overview with bibliography. Timothy Miller's "Charitable Institutions" (pp. 621–30) in the same volume provides a background for understanding the charitable aspects of Attaleiates' pious foundation.

For the place of monasteries in Byzantine society, the works of Rosemary Morris and Peter Hatlie are essential. Both *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium, 843–1118* and *The Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople, ca. 350–850* offer essential context for understanding the important links of the empire's and more specifically the capital's pious foundations with both people and power in Byzantium. Michel Kaplan's "Les monastères et le siècle à Byzance: les investissements des laïcs au XI^e siècle" addresses an issue central in this chapter, i.e., the role of the monastery as an economic unit and as a form of private investment.

The general reader may directly access a series of important primary sources on the organization and operation of pious foundations that

are available online in translation in the Web site maintained by the Dumbarton Oaks Centre for Byzantine Studies. Here one may find *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, edited by John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero. The documents offered here are rich and allow for the study of both the ideological/theological concerns behind the foundation of the monasteries and the economic character of said foundations. A handy guide to daily rations and dietary realities in the Middle Ages can be found in Jessica Banks' *Getting your Daily Bread, Breads in Medieval Society* which may be accessed here <http://www.engr.psu.edu/MTAH/pdfs/breadTCBO.pdf>.

Already in the Byzantine era, there were severe critiques of the lives of monks and the economic activities of monasteries. Eustathios of Thessalonike in the twelfth century preached in the cathedral of the empire's second largest town on the evils of the monk's indolence and cupidity. Attaleiates and Psellos did much the same, in a far less direct fashion in their own historical works. The worldliness of these monks went hand in hand with other important developments. Byzantium had a long tradition of aristocratic patronage of pious foundations as seen in John P. Thomas' *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire*. By the eleventh century, many monasteries that found themselves in fiscal trouble were given, along with their assets, to private "investors" who would restore the health of their finances in exchange for a cut of the proceeds from the more efficient exploitation of the pious foundation's property. The practice gave lay administrators, the infamous *charistikarioi*, influence in the life of those foundations and raised serious objections among members of the Church. On the *charistike*, both the mechanics of it and the Church reactions to the practice see Chapters 6 and 7 in Thomas' *Private Religious Foundations* (pp. 167–213) with the relevant bibliography and Bartusis as seen above p. 253.

CHAPTER 12

Clifford Ando in his *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire* presents a vision of Roman religion as embedded in civic traditions that fits with the outline of Attaleiates' faith presented here. For the Byzantine Empire, Leonora Neville in her *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth Century Byzantium* (p. 120) makes a similar argument by looking at Komnenian era writings and their instrumental use of religion. On the issue of conformity and repression, one may always consult Robert Browning's "Enlightenment

and Repression in Byzantium in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” while Anthony Kaldellis’ work on Agathias, Prokopios, Ioannes Lydos, and Psellos (see Bibliography) provides a blueprint for the study of literary dissent in Byzantium. On the falling from grace of Choirospaktes, see Paul Magdalino’s “In Search of the Byzantine Courtier: Leo Choirospaktes and Constantine Manasses.”

For the eleventh-century intellectual scene, there is now Floris Bernard’s *Writing and Reading Byzantine Secular Poetry, 1025–1081* as well as his articles “Asteiotes and the ideal of the urban intellectual in eleventh-century Byzantium” and “Greet me with words. Gifts and intellectual friendships in eleventh-century Byzantium.” On Psellos, Anthony Kaldellis’ *The Argument of Psellos’ Chronographia* is essential. Here one may follow Kaldellis’ discussion of monasticism in his study of Psellos’ attitude toward the Nazirai (pp. 83–89). On the rapport of Stethatos and Psellos, see Frederick Lauritzen’s fascinating piece “Psello discepolo di Stetato” suggesting certain points of intellectual contact between rigorist and humanist. Lauritzen, however, also notes in “An ironic portrait of a social monk: Christopher of Mytilene and Niketas Stethatos” (p. 207) that Psellos and Stethatos competed for the attention of the educated.

Alexander Kazhdan “The Social Views of Michael Attaleiates,” specifically p. 77, for the questionable notion of Attaleiates as a “conventional Christian” and p. 85 on his distance from Psellos and presumed proximity to the circles of the patriarch Michael Keroularios. On Attaleiates and universal religious values, see Anthony Kaldellis’ “A Byzantine Argument for the Equivalence of All Religions: Michael Attaleiates on Ancient and Modern Romans.” On the judge’s instrumental view of religion, piety, and the role of the divine in history, see *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline*, Chapter 5. The clash of Emperor Isaakios Komnenos with the imperious Keroularios can be followed in my “Sacred Emperor, Holy Patriarch: A New Reading of the Clash between Emperor Isaakios I Komnenos and Patriarch Michael Keroularios in Attaleiates’ History.”

In Chapter 1 (specifically pp. 31–58) of her elegant little book *Arguing it Out: Discussion in Twelfth-Century Byzantium*, Averil Cameron asks important questions about the social and political significance of dialogue as a literary genre in twelfth century. The world revealed by her presentation and queries is one in which discussion, debate, and disputation (she is very cautious using this one term) mark the political and more broadly the cultural life of the empire. She also

notes, without delving into that, that what we see in the twelfth century may have to also be sought in the eleventh. Cameron's discussion of the intersection of religion, philosophy, and rhetoric is also useful for anyone seeking to understand the very questions and problems presented in this chapter. She offers no clear answer and neither do I here. Questions, however, remain and there is much work to be done on them in the future.

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